

Christian Love

or "A Treatise of Christian Love"

by **Hugh Binning**

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Hugh Binning

(1627-1653)

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"A Treatise of Christian Love," by Hugh Binning, was first printed in Edinburgh in 1743.

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“Christian Love”

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“A Treatise of Christian Love”

by the Rev. Hugh Binning, M.A.,
(1627-1653)

Hugh Binning
Regent in the University of Glasgow
& Minister of Govan

“A Treatise of Christian Love”
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“By this shall all men know that
ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
John 13:35

To the Reader

This treatise concerning Christian Love, was composed by the pious and learned Mr. Hugh Binning who was minister of the gospel at Govan, near to Glasgow. He was much celebrated and esteemed in this church, for several practical treatises, frequently printed for the benefit of the public, but this is not inferior to any of them.

Though there have been many excellent discourses in late years on this divine subject, yet, considering that there never was a time wherein a treatise of this kind was more seasonable and necessary than the present, when the love of many, of too, too many, is waxed cold, and this holy fire is almost extinguished, this cannot be thought to be superfluous.

The author was a minister of a most pacific temper, and this amiable grace and virtue did illustriously shine forth in him; and in this discourse, he breathes with a spirit of love in the most affecting and gaining manner, so that, I dare say, that, though it be above ninety years since he composed it, it does not fall short of any performance of this kind that has since appeared in public.

(Love) is the
fundamental
law of the
gospel, to
which all
positive
precepts and
ordinances
should stoop.

This treatise, with a great number of excellent sermons, preached by this able minister of the gospel, many of which have never been printed, in a manuscript in folio, was found in the late Revelation Mr. Robert Wodrow, minister at Eastwood, his library, and all care has been taken to publish it faithfully, without any alteration either by adding or diminishing any thing from it.

This divine subject of Christian love he lays a great stress upon; he shows that there is a greater moment and weight in Christian charity, than in the most part of those things for which some Christians bite and devour one another. It is the fundamental law of the gospel, to which all positive precepts and ordinances should stoop. Unity in judgement is very necessary for the well being of Christians, and Christ's last words persuade this, that unity in affection is most essential and fundamental. This is the badge that he left to his disciples; if we cast away this upon every different apprehension of mind, we disown our Master, and disclaim his token and badge.

Mr. Binning treats of this subject in a most sublime and pathetic strain; he explains the nature of this grace, discourses of the excellent properties and blessed effect and fruits of it, in a ravishing and captivating manner. There is such a variety of beauties in this treatise, that they deserve to be noticed in this preface, and particularly, his admirable commentary on the 13th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, wherein he outstrips all that went before him and, in fine, he enforces the exercise of this grace with the most convincing argument and the most powerful motives. And now, not to detain the reader from the perusal, it is earnestly wished that the end of the publication may, by the blessing of God, be obtained, which is, that Christians in our days may be as the primitive ones, of one mind and of one heart, and that they may love one another with a pure heart fervently.

the Publisher

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore
love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Rom. 13:10

To the 21st Century Reader

Titles are for those who are impressed with them, so that by way of recommending an author or preacher as worthy of being read or heard, Jesus and Peter and John and the rest would be excluded for simple lack of scholarly title. Let us, even as many as name the name of Jesus Christ, not concern ourselves with titles but with the spirit of him who speaks.

We recommend the works of Hugh Binning - and especially this work on “Christian Love,” for the purity of the teaching of Jesus Christ that is found in him and for the gravity of his presentation of the doctrine and application of the Gospel.

Indeed, without purity of doctrine and the simplicity of Christ, no teacher or preacher, though he or she name the name of Jesus often, is worthy of commendation for any reason or cause: not by reason of great learning, age, titles obtained or honors received, not even though he sit in the very highest seat of honor over other men. For, those who bestow such honors and titles bestow them upon men of like mind and conscience toward (*or against*) God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But if any speak according to the Gospel and preach with purity of doctrine according to the simplicity of Christ, though he be but a child or though she be but a young woman, it is the gift of God that rests upon such. And we who are Christian must admit that this is so, lest we exclude even our own selves, for it is according to the will of God that his Spirit “bloweth where it listeth” (Joh 3:8). We then, walk in the light, continually testing all things, that we may know and receive one another for love of the truth and for the Word of God that is glorified in and by such as love the truth.

To as many as receive the Gospel and know that work of God’s grace

and power in themselves, this treatise is both a comfort in Christian joy and an exhortation to continue in and increase in godliness; for we have not, nor will we, so long as we remain upon this earth, reach that splendid and heavenly likeness to which we aspire, "but we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor 3:18. Thus, we press on, in exhortation and doctrine, in discipline - as from God, in labors, and in instruction that we might increase the more.

To those who misplace themselves in the work of grace, who speak of faith and love toward God while they are yet deprived of the love of the truth in their hearts and love of the saints in this world, this little book on Christian love is a beginning by way of exposition on the absolute necessity of the work of repentance and turning to God, who calls *all* men to repentance and who "delights to show mercy" (Micah 7:18). This is a call to seek God with fear for others who have been satisfied in hypocrisy; for he who "delights to show mercy" will by no means leave off judging those who call him "Lord, Lord" (Luke 6:46) and name the name of Jesus Christ while they yet remain without the work of grace in their hearts.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained."
Act 17:30-31

We recommend this book on Christian love for the reason that, in this present era, as we witness history being reshuffled and dealt by the teachers of a new 'ecumenism,' who have contrived a past in which they freely mingle creeds and professions in an equal share and like offense against Christ and against Christian love, this treatise - *and so many others* - stands as a proof and a witness against all such 'misteaching'. This little treatise is a witness to the power of grace in the heart; it is a witness to the greatness of the spirit of the Reformation in faith, holiness and Gospel truth; it is a witness to the harmlessness of those who have preached the Gospel in truth; and it is a witness to Reformation theology, that is, Protestant

theology - what it meant, what it preached, and what it still means among those who know and profess it. For we, even as they did then, stand, not condemning and despising men for following the religious tradition of the ecclesiastical presence which rules their lives and claims power over them, but, even as the Protestants did before, and even as the Medieval Waldenses and Vaudois did before them, and even as did the Apostles and disciples of Christ before them, and the prophets yet before them, calling whoever will hear to a faith that believes not only that God exists, but testifies that his Word is true which bids them to repent, which calls them to a new heart by the grace of Christ in the knowledge of him and in the hearing of the Gospel of Truth.

This little treatise stands as a shining lamp against those religions, ancient and modern, whose strength is in outward form, in tradition and in the doctrines and commandments of men, which has not the heart or the Spirit of the Gospel, the "harmlessness of a dove," (Matt 10:16), or the power of a new birth in Jesus Christ. Even against the current trend and popular preaching of self-perfection through self-help, here is a counter theology - a Gospel theology, a preaching of repentance, of overcoming by faith and by the crucifying of the flesh, by the power of grace and the new creature, unto a life of sanctification and holiness, "without which no man will see the Lord," (Heb. 12:14).

Hail & Fire, 2008

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Chapter 1

The Law of Love

The beauty and excellency of this world consists, not only in the perfection and comeliness of each part in it, but especially in the wise and wonderful proportion and union of these several parts. It is not the lineaments and colors that make the image or complete beauty, but the proportion and harmony of these, though different severally. And truly that is the wonder, that such repugnant natures, such different parts, and dissentient qualities, do conspire together in such an exact perfect unity and agreement, in which the wisdom of God doth most appear, by making all things in number, weight and measure. His power appears in the making all the materials of nothing, but his wisdom is manifested in the ordering and disposing so dissonant natures into one well agreeing and comely frame; so that this orderly disposition of all things into one fabric, is that harmonious melody of the creation, made up as it were of dissonant sounds, and that comely beauty of the world, resulting from such a proportion and wise combination of divers lines and colors. To go no further than the body of a man, what various elements are combined into a well ordered being, the extreme qualities being so refracted and abated as they may join in friendship and society, and make up one sweet temperament!

Now, it is most reasonable to suppose, that, by the law of creation, there was no less order and unity to be among men, the chiefest of the works of God. And so it was indeed. As God had moulded the rest of the world into a beautiful frame, by the first stamp of his finger, so he did engrave upon the hearts of men such a principle, as might be a perpetual bond and tie to unite the sons of men together. This was nothing else but the law of love, the principal fundamental law of our creation, love to God, founded on that essential dependence and subordination to God, and love to man, grounded upon that communion and interest in one image of

God. All the commandments of the first and second table are but so many branches of these trees, or streams of these fountains. Therefore our Saviour gives a complete abridgment of the law of nature and the moral law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, this is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," Mat. 22:37-39. And therefore, as Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. 13:10. The universal debt we owe to God is love in the superlative degree, and the universal debt we owe one another is love in an inferior degree, yet of no lower kind than that of our selves. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another" (Rom. 13:8), and that collateral with himself, as Christ speaks. Unto these laws all other are subordinate, and one of them is subordinate to the other, but to nothing else. And so, as long as the love of God may go before, the love of man should follow, and whatever doth not untie the bond of divine affection, ought not to loose the knot of that love which is linked with it. When the uniting of souls together divides both from God, then indeed, and only then, must this knot be untied that the other may be kept fast.

But this beautiful and comely frame of man is marred. Sin hath cut in pieces that divine love that knit man to God; and the dissolving of this hath loosed that link of human society, love to our neighbor. And now all is rents, rags, and distractions, because self love hath usurped the throne. The unity of the world of mankind is dissolved, one is distracted from another, following his own private inclinations and inordinate affection, which is the poison of enmity, and seed of all discord. If the love of God and of one another had kept the throne, there had been a coordination and co-working of all men in all their actions, for God's glory and the common good of man. But now self love having enthroned itself, every man is for himself, and strives, by all means, to make a concurrence of all things to his own interest and designs. The first principles of love would have made all men's actions and courses flow into one ocean of divine glory and mutual edification, so that there could not have been any disturbance or jarring amongst them, all flowing into one common end. But self-love hath turned all the channels backward towards itself, and this is its wretched aim and endeavour, in which it wearies itself, and discomposes the world, to wind and turn in every thing,

and to make, in the end, a general affluence of the streams into its own bosom. This is the seed of all division and confusion which is among men, while every man makes himself the centre, it cannot choose but all the lines and draughts of men's courses must thwart and cross each other.

Now, the Lord Jesus having redeemed lost man, and repaired his ruins, he makes up this breach, especially restores this fundamental ordinance of our creation, and unites men again to God and to one another. Therefore he is our peace, he hath removed the seeds of discord between God and man, and between man and man. And this is the subject of that divine epistle which the beloved Apostle, full of that divine love, did pen, "God is love, and in this was the love of God manifested, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world. And he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, but we love God, because he loved us first, and if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 John 4. This is the very substance of the gospel, a doctrine of God's love to man, and of man's love due to God, and to them who are begotten of God, the one declared, the other commanded. So that much of the gospel is but a new edition or publication of that old ancient fundamental law of creation. This is that paradox which John delivers, "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which you had from the beginning; again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth," 1 John 2:7-8. It is no new commandment, but that primitive command of love to God and men, which is the fulfilling of the law; and yet new it is, because there is a new obligation superadded. The bond of creation was great, but the tie of redemption is greater. God gave a being to man, that is enough. But God to become a miserable man for man, that is infinitely more. Fellow creatures, that is sufficient for a bond of amity. But to be once fellow captives, companions in misery, and then companions in mercy and blessedness, that is a new and stronger bond. Mutual love was the badge of reasonable creatures in innocency. But now Jesus Christ hath put a new stamp and signification on it; and made it the very differential character and token of his disciples, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." And therefore, when he is making his latter will, he gives

this testamentary commandment to his children and heirs, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another," John 13:34. New indeed! For though it be the same command, yet there was never such a motive, inducement, and persuasive to it as this: "God so loved that he gave me, and I so loved that I gave myself, that is an addition more than all that was before," John 13:34-35.

There is a special stamp of excellency put on this affection of love, that God delights to exhibit himself to us in such a notion. "God is love" (1John 4:8), and so holds out himself as the pattern of this. "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love," Eph. 5:1-2. This is the great virtue and property which we should imitate our Father in. As God hath a general love to all the creatures, from whence the river of his goodness flows out through the earth, and in that, is like the sun conveying his light and benign influence, without partiality or restraint, to the whole world, but his special favour runs in a more narrow channel towards these whom he hath chosen in Christ; so in this a Christian should be like his Father, and there is nothing in which he resembles him more than in this, to walk in love towards all men, even our enemies. For in this he gives us a pattern, Mat. 5:44-45: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." To do good to all, and to be ready to forgive all, is the glory of God, and certainly it is the glory of a child of God to be merciful as his Father is merciful, and good to all, and kind to the unthankful. And this is to be perfect as he is perfect. This perfection is charity and love to all. But the particular and special current of affection will run toward the household of faith, those who are of the same descent, and family, and love. This drawn into such a compass, is the badge and livery of his disciples. These two in a Christian are nothing but the reflex of the love of God, and streams issuing out from it. A Christian walking in love to all, blessing his enemies, praying for them, not reviling or cursing again, but blessing for cursing, and praying for reviling, forgiving all, and ready to give to the necessities of all, and more especially, uniting the force of his love and delight,

to bestow it upon these who are the excellent ones, and delight of God, such a one is his Father's picture, so to speak. He is partaker of that divine nature, and royal spirit of love. Gal. 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." 1 Thes. 3:12-13: "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you, to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints."

It is foretold by our Lord Jesus Christ, that in the last days the "love of many shall wax cold," Mat. 24:12. And truly this is the symptom of a decaying and fading Christian and church. Love is the vital spirits of a Christian, which are the principles of all motion and lively operation. When there is a deliquium^a in these, the soul is in a decay; it is so comprehensive an evil, as alone is sufficient to make an evil time. And besides, it is the argument and evidence, as well as the root and fountain, of abounding iniquity, because this is the epidemical disease of the present time, love cooled, and passion heated, whence proceed all the feverish distempers, contentions, wars and divisions, which have brought the church of God near to expiring. Therefore being mindful of that of the Apostle, Heb. 10:24, I would think it pertinent to consider one another, and provoke again unto love and to good works. It was the great charge that Christ had against Ephesus, "Thou hast left thy first love." I shall therefore show the excellency and necessity of this grace, that so we may remember from whence we have fallen and repent, that we may do the first works, lest he come quickly and remove our candlestick, Rev. 2:4-5.

a. Latin: a deficiency.



Chapter 2

God is the Pattern of Love

I. Then, it might endear this Christian virtue unto us, that God propones^a himself as the pattern of it, that Christ holds out himself as the rare example of it for our imitation. It is what doth most endear God to creatures, and certainly it must likewise appreciate them one to another. 1 John 4:7-8, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Mat. 5:44-45, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Eph. 5:1-2: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor." John 13:35: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Now the following of so rare an example, and imitating of so noble and high a pattern, doth exalt the soul into a royalty and dignity, that it dwells in God and God in it, 1 John 4:16. This is the highest point of conformity with God, and the nearest resemblance of our Father. To be like him in wisdom, that wretched aim, did cast men as low as hell, but to aspire unto a likeness in love, lifts up the soul as high as heaven, even to a mutual inhabitation.

II. It should add an exceeding weight unto it, that we have not only so high a pattern, but so excellent a motive, "God so loved," and

a. Latin: to set, as to show forth. God does not hide himself from man but shows himself the very pattern, that is, the very source and origin of love (Act. 14:17; Rom. 1:19-23) that we may desire to be as he is, and that through love, we may show ourselves his children. (H&F)

"herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," therefore, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," 1 John 4:9-11. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us," Eph. 4:2. Here are the topics of the most vehement persuasion. There is no invention can afford so constraining a motive, God so loving us, sinful and miserable us, that he gave his only begotten Son, that we might live through him, and Christ so loving us, that he gave himself a sacrifice for sin. O then! who should live to himself, when Christ died for others? And who should not love, when "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all?" "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. 8:32, and 5:8 and 14:7-8.

III. Join to this so earnest and pressing a command, even the latter will of him to whom we owe that we are, and are redeemed. That is the burden he lays on us. This is all the recompense he seeks for his unparalleled love, "This is my command, that as I have loved you, ye love one another," John 13:34. Your goodness cannot extend to me, therefore I assign all the beneficence and bounty ye owe to me, I give it over to these whom I have loved, and have not loved my life for them. Now, says he, whatsoever ye would count yourself obliged to do to me, if I were on the earth among you, do it to these poor ones whom I have left behind me, and this is all the testimony of gratitude I crave. Mat. 25:34-40: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "These ye have always with you, but me ye have not always." It is strange how earnestly, how solicitously, how pungently he presses this exhortation, John 13:34-35, "A new

commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," and John 15:12 and 17, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. These things I command you, that ye love one another," and his Apostles after him, 1 Thes. 4:9, "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Col. 3:14: "And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." 1 Pet. 4:8: "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." But above all, that beloved disciple, who being so intimate with Jesus Christ, - we may lawfully conceive he was mured^a to that affectionate frame by his converse with Christ, - has been most mindful of Christ's testamentary injunctions. He cannot speak three sentences but this is one of them. All which may convince us of this one thing, that there is a greater moment and weight of Christianity in charity than in the most part of these things for which Christians bite and devour one another. It is the fundamental law of the gospel, to which all positive precepts and ordinances should stoop. Unity in judgment is very needful for the well being of Christians. But Christ's last words persuade this, that unity in affection is more essential and fundamental. This is the badge he left to his disciples. If we cast away this upon every different apprehension of mind, we disown our Master, and disclaim his token and badge.

IV. The Apostle Paul puts a high note of commendation upon charity, when he styles it the bond of perfection. "Above all things," says he, "put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness," Col. 3:14. I am sure it hath not such a high place in the minds and practice of Christians now, as it hath in the roll of the parts and members of the new man here set down. Here it is above all. With us it is below all, even below every apprehension of doubtful truths. An agreement in the conception of any poor petty controversial matter of the times, is made the badge of Christianity, and set in an eminent place above all which the Apostle mentions, in the 12th verse, "bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, humbleness of mind, meekness,

a. From the Latin 'murus' or wall: to be walled about or enveloped by or in some thing. (H&F)

long suffering." Nay, charity itself is but a waiting handmaid to this mistress.

But let us consider the Apostle's significant character he puts on it. It is a bond of perfection, as it were, a bundle of graces, and chain of virtues, even the very cream and flower of many graces combined. It is the sweet result of the united force of all graces. It is the very head and heart of the new man, which we are invited to put on, "Above all put on charity." All these fore-mentioned perfections are bound and tied together, by the girdle of charity and love, to the new man. When charity is born and brought forth, it may be styled "Gad",^a for a "troop cometh," "chorus virtutum," a troop or company of virtues" which it leads and commands. Charity hath a tender heart, for it hath "bowels of mercies," - such a compassionate and melting temper of spirit, that the misery or calamity, whether bodily or spiritual, of other men, makes an impression upon it. And therefore it is the Christian sympathy which affects itself with others' afflictions. If others be moved, it moves itself through comfort and sympathy. This is not only extended to bodily and outward infirmities, but, most of all, to infirmities of mind and heart, error, ignorance, darkness, falling and failing in temptation. We are made priests to God our Father, to have compassion on them who are ignorant and out of the way, for that we ourselves are also compassed with infirmity, Rev. 1:6 and Heb. 5:2. Then, love hath a humble mind, "humbleness of mind," else it could not stoop and condescend to others of low degree, and therefore Christ exhorts above all to lowliness. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Mat. 11:29. If a man be not lowly, to sit down below offences and infirmities, his love cannot rise above them. Self-love is the greatest enemy to true Christian love, and pride is the fountain of self-love, because it is impossible that, in this life, there should be an exact correspondence between the thoughts and ways of Christians. Therefore it is not possible to keep this bond of perfection unbroken, except there be a mutual condescendence. Self-love would have all conformed to it, and if that be not, there is the rent presently. But humbleness of mind can conform itself to all things, and this keeps the bond fast. Then charity, by the link of humility, hath meekness chained unto it, and kindness. Love is of a sweet complexion, meek

a. Gen. 30:11.

and kind. Pride is the mother of passion, humbleness the mother of meekness. The inward affection is composed by meekness, and the outward actions adorned by gentleness and kindness. O that sweet composure of spirit! The heart of the wicked is as the troubled sea, no rest, no quiet in it, continual tempests raising continual waves of disquiet. An unmeek spirit is like a boiling pot, it troubles itself and annoys others. Then, at length, charity, by lowliness and meekness, is the most durable, enduring, long-suffering thing in the world, "with long suffering, forbearing one another in love." These are the only principles of patience and longanimity. Anger and passion is expressed in scripture under the name of haste, and it is a sudden, furious, hasty thing, a rash, inconsiderate, impatient thing, more hasty than speedy. Now the special exercises and operations of these graces are in the 13th verse, "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another," according to Christ's example. And indeed these are so high and sublime works, as charity must yoke all the fore-mentioned graces, unite them all in one troop, for the accomplishing of them. And the great and sweet fruit of all this is comprehended in the 15th verse, "The peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called in one body." Peace with God is not here meant, but the peace which God hath made up between men. All were shattered and rent asunder. The Lord hath by his Son Jesus Christ gathered so many into one body, the church, and by one Spirit quickens all. Now where love is predominant, there is a sweet peace and harmony between all the members of this one body. And this peace and tranquillity of affections rules and predominates over all these lusts, which are the mineries^a of contentions, and strifes, and wars.

V. Add unto this another special mark of excellency that this Apostle puts on charity, or Christian love. "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," 1 Tim. 1:5. If this were duly pondered, I do believe it would fill all hearts with astonishment, and faces with confusion, that they neglected the weightier matters of the law, and over stretched some other particular duties, to fill up the place of this, which is the end, the fulfilling of the law. It appears by this that charity is a cream of graces. It is the spirit and quintessence extracted out of these

a. Or mines.

cardinal graces, unfeigned faith, a good conscience, a pure heart. It is true, the immediate end of the law, as it is now expounded unto us, is to drive us to believe in Jesus Christ, as it is expressed, Rom. 10:4. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But this believing in Christ is not the last end of it. Faith unfeigned in a Mediator is intentionally for this, to give the answer of a good conscience in the blood of Christ, and to purify the heart by the water of the Spirit, and so to bring about at length, by such a sweet compass, the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled by love in us, which by divine imputation is fulfilled to us. Now consider the context, and it shall yield much edification. Some teachers (1 Tim. 1:4) exercised themselves and others in endless genealogies, which, though they contained some truth in them, yet they were perplexing, and brought no edification to souls. Curiosity might go round in such debates, and bewilder itself as in a labyrinth, but they did rather multiply disputes than bring true edification in the faith and love of God and men. Now, says he, they do wholly mistake the end of the law, of the doctrine of the scripture. The end and great purpose of it is love, which proceeds from faith in Christ, purifying the heart. This is the sum of all, to worship God in faith and purity, and to love one another. And whatsoever debates and questions do tend to the breach of this bond, and have no eminent and remarkable advantage in them, suppose they be conceived to be about matters of conscience, yet the entertaining and prosecuting them to the prejudice of this, is a manifest violence offered to the law of God, which is the rule of conscience. It is a perverting of scripture and conscience to a wrong end. I say then, that charity and Christian love should be the moderatrix of all our actions towards men. From thence they should proceed, and according to this rule be formed. I am persuaded if this rule were followed, the present differences in judgment of godly men, about such matters as minister mere questions, would soon be buried in the gulf of Christian affection.

VI. Now to complete the account of the eminence of this grace, take that remarkable chapter of Paul's, 1 Cor. 13, where he institutes the comparison between it and other graces, and in the end pronounces on its behalf, "the greatest of these is charity." I wonder how we do please ourselves, as that we had attained already, when we do not so much as labor to be acquainted with this, in which the life

of Christianity consists, without which faith is dead, our profession vain, our other duties and endeavours for the truth unacceptable to God and men. "Yet I show you a more excellent way," says he in the end of the former chapter. And this is the more excellent way, charity and love, more excellent than gifts, speaking with tongues, prophesying, etc. And is it not more excellent than the knowledge and acknowledgment of some present questionable matters, about governments, treaties, and such like, and far more than every punctilio of them? But he goes higher. Suppose a man could spend all his substance upon the maintenance of such an opinion, and give his life for the defence of it, though in itself it be commendable, yet if he want charity and love to his brethren, if he overstretch that point of conscience to the breach of Christian affection, and duties flowing from it, it profits him nothing. Then certainly charity must rule out external actions, and have the predominant hand in the use of all gifts, in the venting of all opinions. Whatsoever knowledge and ability a man hath, charity must employ it, and use it. Without this, duties and graces make a noise, but they are shallow and empty within. Now he shows the sweet properties of it, and good effects of it, how universal an influence it hath on all things, but especially how necessary it is to keep the unity of the church.

Charity "is kind" and "suffereth long," (μακροθυμέω: makrothumeo) (1 Cor. 13:4), it is longanimous or magnanimous and there is indeed no great, truly great, mind but is patient and long suffering. It is a great weakness and pusillanimity to be soon angry. Such a spirit hath not the rule of itself, but is in bondage to its own lust, but "he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city" (Pro. 16:32). Now, it is much of this affection of love that overrules passion. There is a greatness and height in it, to love them that deserve not well of us, to be kind to the unfaithful, not to be easily provoked, and not soon disobliged. A fool's wrath is presently known. It is a folly and weakness of spirit, which love, much love cures and amends. It suffers much unkindness, and long suffers it, and yet can be kind.

"Charity envieth not," 1 Cor. 13:4. Envy is the seed of all contention, and self-love brings it forth. When every man desires to be esteemed chief, and would have pre-eminence among others, their ways and courses must interfere one with another. It is this that makes discord.

Every man would abate^a from another's estimation, that he may add to his own. None lives content with his own lot or station, and it is the aspiring beyond that, which puts all the wheels out of course. I believe this is the root of many contentions among Christians, - the apprehension of slighting, the conceit of disrespect, and such like, kindles the flame of difference, and heightens the least offence to an unpardonable injury. But charity envieth not where it may lie quietly low. Though it be under the feet of others, and beneath its own due place, yet it envieth not, it can lie contentedly so. Suppose it be slighted and despised, yet it takes it not highly, because it is lowly in mind.

"Charity is not puffed up, and vaunteth^b not itself;" 1 Cor. 13:4. If charity have gifts and graces beyond others, it restrains itself, with the bridle of modesty and humility, from vaunting or boasting, or any thing in its carriage that may savor of conceit. Pride is a self admirer, and despises others, and to please itself it cares not to displease others. There is nothing so incomportable^c in human or Christian society, so apt to alienate others' affections, for the more we take of our own affection to ourselves, we shall have the less from others. O these golden rules of Christian walking! Rom. 12:10, 16, "Be kindly affectioned^d one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." O but that were a comely strife among Christians, each to prefer another in unfeigned love, and in lowliness of mind, each to esteem another better than himself! Phil. 2:3. "Knowledge puffeth up," says this Apostle (1 Cor. 8:1) "but charity edifieth." It is but a swelling and tumor of the mind, but love is solid piety and real religion.

Then charity doth nothing unseemly, "behaveth not itself unseemly," 1 Cor. 13:5. Vanity and swelling of mind will certainly break forth into some unseemly carriage, as vain estimation, and such like, but

a. Every man would reduce the estimation of another, that he might think more highly of himself and be seen as greater in the estimation of others. (H&F)

b. Or, parades not itself. (H&F)

c. Or, unsuitable.

d. That is, affectionate. (H&F)

charity keeps a sweet decorum in all its carriage, so as not to provoke and irritate others, nor yet to expose itself to contempt or mockery. Or the word may be taken thus, it is not fastidious^a. It accounts not itself disgraced and abused, to condescend to men of low estate. It can with its Master bow down to wash a disciple's feet, and not think it unseemly. Whatsoever it submits to in doing or suffering, it is not ashamed of it, as that it were not suitable and comely.

“Charity seeketh not her own things^b,” 1 Cor. 13:5. Self denial and true love are inseparable. Self love makes a monopoly of all things to its own interest, and this is most opposite to Christian affection and communion, which puts all in one bank. If every one of the members should seek its own things, and not the good of the whole body, what a miserable distemper would it cause in the body? We are called into one body in Christ, and therefore we should look not on our own things only, but every man also on the things of others^c, Phil. 2:4. There is a public interest of saints, mutual edification in faith and love, which charity will prefer to its own private interest. Addictedness to our own apprehension, and too much self overweening and self pleasing is the grand enemy of that place to which we are called into one body. Since one Spirit informs and enlivens all the members, what a monstrosity is it for one member to seek its own things, and attend to its own private interest only, as if it were a distinct body!

Charity “is not easily provoked,” 1 Cor. 13:5. This is the straight and solid firmness of it, that it is not soon moved with external impressions. It is long suffering, it suffers long and much. It will not be shaken by violent and weighty pressures of injuries, where there is much provocation given, yet it is not provoked. Now to complete it, it is not easily provoked at light offences. It is strange how little a spark of injuries puts all in a flame because our spirits are as gunpowder, - so capable of combustion through corruption.

a. Or, excessively sensitive. (H&F)

b. That is, it seeks not its own interests and increase. (H&F)

c. That is, on the interests and increase of others. The strength of the body benefits the whole body; as also the strengthening of the arm or the mind, or the eye is not to the benefit of that member by itself, but to the benefit of the whole body. (H&F)

How ridiculous, for the most part, are the causes of our wrath! For light things we are heavily moved, and for ridiculous things sadly, even as children who fall out among themselves for toys and trifles, or as beasts that are provoked upon the very show of a color, as red or such like. We would save ourselves much labor, if we could judge before we suffer ourselves to be provoked. But now we follow the first appearance of wrong, and being once moved from without, we continue our commotion within, lest we should seem to be angry without a cause. But charity hath a more solid foundation. It dwells in God, for God is love, and so is truly great, truly high, and looks down with a steadfast countenance upon these lower things. The upper world is continually calm and serene. No clouds, no tempests there, no winds, nothing to disturb the harmonious and uniform motion, but it is this lower world that is troubled and tossed with tempests, and obscured with clouds. So a soul dwelling in God by love, is exalted above the cloudy region. He is calm, quiet, serene, and is not disturbed or interrupted in his motion of love to God or men.

Charity "thinketh no evil," 1 Cor. 13:5. Charity is apt to take all things in the best sense. If a thing may be subject to diverse acceptations, it can put the best construction on it. It is so benign and good in its own nature that it is not inclinable to suspect others. It desires to condemn no man, but would gladly, as far as reason and conscience will permit, absolve every man. It is so far from desire of revenge, that it is not provoked or troubled with an injury. For that were nothing else but to wrong itself because others have wronged it already, and it is so far from wronging others, that it will not willingly so much as think evil of them. Yet if need require, charity can execute justice, and inflict chastisement, not out of desire of another's misery, but out of love and compassion to mankind. "Charitas non punit quia peccatum est, sed ne peccaretur,"^a it looks more to prevention of future sin, than to revenge of a bypast fault, and can do all without any discomposure of spirit, as a physician cuts a vein without anger. "Quis enim cut medetur irascitur?" "Who is angry at his own patient?"

a. "Charity does not inflict punishment because an offence has been committed, but lest an offence should be committed."

Charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity," 1 Cor. 13:6. Charity is not defiled in itself, though it condescend to all. Though it can love and wish well to evil men, yet it rejoiceth not in iniquity. It is like the sun's light that shines on a dunghill, and is not defiled, receives no tincture from it. Some base and wicked spirits make a sport to do mischief themselves, and take pleasure in others that do it. But charity rejoices in no iniquity or injustice, though it were done to its own enemy. It cannot take pleasure in the unjust sufferings of any who hate it, because it hath no enemy but sin and iniquity and hates nothing else with a perfect hatred. Therefore whatever advantage should redound to itself by other men's iniquities, it cannot rejoice, that iniquity, its capital enemy, should reign and prevail. But it "rejoiceth in the truth." The advancement and progress of others in the way of truth and holiness is its pleasure. Though that should eclipse its own glory, yet it looks not on it with an evil eye. If it can find out any good in them that are enemies to it, it is not grieved to find it and know it, but can rejoice at any thing which may give ground of good construction of them. There is nothing more beautiful in its eyes than to see every one get their own due, though it alone should come behind.

Charity "beareth all things," 1 Cor. 13:7. By nature we are undaunted heifers, cannot bear any thing patiently. But charity is accustomed to the yoke, - to the yoke of reproaches and injuries from others, to a burden of other men's infirmities and failings. We would all be borne upon others' shoulders, but we cannot put our own shoulders under other men's burden, according to that royal law of Christ, Rom. 15:1. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" and Gal. 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," that is the law of love, no question.

Charity "believeth all things," 1 Cor. 13:7. Our nature is malignant and wicked, and therefore most suspicious and jealous, and apt to take all in the worst part. But charity hath much candor and humanity in it, and can believe well of every man, and believe all things as far as truth will permit. It knows that grace can be beside a man's sins. It knows that itself is subject to such like infirmities. Therefore it is not a rigid and censorious judger; it allows as much latitude to others as it would desire of others. It is true it is not blind and

ignorant. It is judicious, and hath eyes that can discern between colors. "Credit omnia credenda, sperat omnia speranda." "It believes all things that are believable, and hopes all things that are hopeful." If love have not sufficient evidences, yet she believes if there be some probabilities to the contrary, as well as for it. The weight of charity inclines to the better part, and so casts the balance of hope and persuasion; yet being sometimes deceived, she hath reason to be watchful and wise, for "the simple believeth every word," (Pro. 14:15) If charity cannot have ground of believing any good, yet it hopes still. "Qui non est hodie, cras magis aptus erit,"^a says charity, and therefore it is patient and gentle, waiting on all, if peradventure God may "give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Tim. 2:25. Charity would account it both atheism and blasphemy, to say such a man cannot, will not find mercy. But to pronounce of such as have been often approved in the conscience of all, and sealed into many hearts, that they will never find mercy, that they have no grace, because of some failings in practice and differences from us, it were not in sobriety but madness. It is certainly love and indulgence to ourselves, that make us aggravate other men's faults to such a height. Self love looks on other men's failings through a multiplying or magnifying glass, but she puts her own faults behind her back. "Non videt quod in mantica quæ a tergo est."^b Therefore she can suffer much in herself but nothing in others, and certainly much self forbearance and indulgence can spare little for others. But charity is just contrary. She is most rigid on her own behalf, will not pardon herself easily, knows no revenge but what is spoken of 2 Cor. 7:11, self revenge, and hath no indignation but against herself. Thus she can spare much candor and forbearance for others, and hath little or nothing of indignation left behind to consume on others.

"Charity never faileth," 1Cor. 13:8. This is the last note of

a. "He that is not inclined to-day will be more inclined tomorrow."

b. "She does not see what is in the bag behind her." Sed non videmus manticæ quod in tergo." There is an allusion here to one of the fables of Æsop. Jupiter, says Aesop, placed two bags upon men. The one, which contained their own faults, he put upon their back, and the other, which was filled with the faults of others, he suspended from their neck, upon their breast. In this way, we cannot see our own misdeeds, but, perceiving those of others, we censure them freely.

commendation. Things have their excellency from their use and from their continuance; both are here. Nothing so useful, no such friend of human or Christian society as charity, the advantage of it reaches all things. And then, it is most permanent and durable. When all shall go, it shall remain. When ordinances, and knowledge attained by means and ordinances, shall vanish^a, charity shall abide, and then receive its consummation. Faith of things inevident^b and obscure shall be drowned in the vision of seeing God's face clearly. Hope of things to come shall be exhausted in the possession and fruition of them. But love only remains in its own nature and notion, only it is perfected by the addition of so many degrees as may suit that blessed estate. Therefore I think it should be the study of all saints who believe immortality, and hope for eternal life, to put on that garment of charity, which is the livery of all the inhabitants above. We might have heaven upon earth as far as is possible if we dwelt in love, and love dwelt in and possessed our hearts. What an unsuitable thing might a believer think it, to hate him in this world whom he must love eternally, and to contend and strive with these, even for matters of small moment, with bitterness and rigidity, with whom he shall have an eternal, uninterrupted unity and fellowship? Should we not be assaying here how that glorious garment suits us? And truly there is nothing makes a man so heaven-like or God like as this, much love and charity.

Now there is one consideration might persuade us the more unto it, that here we know but darkly and in part, and therefore our knowledge, at best, is but obscure and inevident, oftentimes subject to many mistakes and misapprehensions of truth, according as "mediums" represent them. And therefore there must be some latitude of love allowed one to another in this state of imperfection, else it is impossible to keep unity, and we must conflict often with our own shadows, and bite and devour one another for some deceiving appearances. The imperfection and obscurity of knowledge should make all men jealous of themselves, especially in matters of a doubtful nature, and not so clearly determined by scripture. Because our knowledge is weak, shall our love be so?

a. Old English: to vanish or escape perception.

b. That is, not readily evident or clearly revealed. (H&F)

Nay, rather let charity grow stronger, and aspire unto perfection, because knowledge is imperfect. What is wanting in knowledge let us make up in affection, and let the gap of difference in judgment be swallowed up with the bowels of mercies and love, and humbleness of mind. And then we shall have hid our infirmity of understanding as much as may be. Thus we may go hand in hand together to our Father's house, where, at length, we must be together.



Chapter 3

He that Loves is of God

I may briefly reduce the chief persuading motive to this so needful and so much desiderated grace into some three or four heads. All things within and without persuade to it, but especially the right consideration of the love of God in Christ, the wise and the impartial reflection on ourselves, the consideration of our brethren whom we are commanded to love, and the thorough inspection into the nature and use of the grace itself.

In consideration of the 'First', a soul might argue itself into a complacency with it and thus persuade itself, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love," 1 John 4:8. And since he that hath known and believed the love that God hath to us, must certainly dwell in love, since these two have such a strait indissoluble connexion, then, as I would not declare to all my atheism and my ignorance of God, I will study to love my brethren. And that I may love them, I will give myself to the search of God's love, which is the place, "locus inventionis",^a whence I may find out the strongest and most effectual 'medium' to persuade my mind, and to constrain my heart to Christian affection.

'First', then, when I consider that so glorious and great a Majesty, so high and holy an One, self sufficient and all sufficient, who needs not go abroad to seek delight, because all happiness and delight

a. These are terms (locus inventionis the place or topic of invention, and medium, the argument or middle term of a syllogism) which, belonging to the dialectic art, were employed by the school-men. All the arts and sciences have certain general subjects connected with them which presuppose particular facts, axioms, and rules. These general subjects, being used in the invention of arguments, were called topics or common places. "They were so called by Aristotle, as if they were the seats from which arguments were to be brought forth." (Sic appellatæ ab Aristotele sunt hæ quasi sedes e quibus argumenta promuntur).

is enclosed within his own bosom, can yet love a creature, yea and be reconciled to so sinful a creature, which he might crush as easily as speak a word, that he can place his delight on so unworthy and base an object, O! how much more should I, a poor wretched creature, love my fellow creature, oftentimes better than myself, and, for the most part, not much worse? There is an infinite distance and disproportion betwixt God and man, yet he came over all that to love man. What difficulty should I have then to place my affection on my equal at worst, and often better? There cannot be any proportionable distance betwixt the highest and lowest, between the richest and poorest, between the most wise and the most ignorant, between the most gracious and the most ungodly, as there is between the infinite God and a finite angel. Should then the mutual infirmities and failings of Christians, be an insuperable and impassable gulf, as between heaven and hell, that none can pass over by a bridge of love to either? "If God so loved us," should not we love one another? 1 John 4:11. And besides, when I consider that God hath not only loved me, but my brethren who were worthy of hatred, with an everlasting love, and passed over all that was in them, and hath spread his skirt over their nakedness, and made it a time of love, which was a time of loathing, how can I withhold my affection where God hath bestowed his? Are they not infinitely more unworthy of his than mine? Since infinite wrongs hath not changed his, shall poor, petty, and light offences hinder mine? That my love concenter^a with God's on the same persons, is it not enough?

'Next,' that Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, who was the Father's delight from eternity, and in whom he delighted, yet, notwithstanding, could rejoice in the habitable places of the earth, and so love poor wretched men, yet enemies, that he gave himself for them, that God so loved that he gave his Son, and Christ so loved that he gave himself a sacrifice for sin, both for me and others, O! who should not or will not be constrained, in beholding this mirror of incomparable and spotless love to love others? (1 John 4:9-11). "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not

a. Old English: to meet at the same point. (H&F)

that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," Eph. 5:2. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor," especially when he seems to require no other thing, and imposes no more grievous command upon us for recompense of all his labor of love. John 13:34-35. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." If all that was in me did not alienate his love from me, how should any thing in others estrange our love to them? If God be so kind to his enemies, and Christ so loving that he gives his life for his enemies to make them friends, what should we do to our enemies, what to our friends? This one example may make all created love to blush and be ashamed. How narrow, how limited, how selfish is it!

'Thirdly,' if God hath forgiven me so many grievous offences, if he hath pardoned so heinous and innumerable injuries, that amount to a kind of infiniteness in number and quality, O how much more am I bound to forgive my brethren a few light and trivial offences? Col. 3:13. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye," Eph. 4:32. "And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." With what face can I pray, "Lord, forgive me my sins," when I may meet with such a retortion, 'thou canst not forgive thy brethren's sins, infinitely less both in number and degree?' Mat. 6:15, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." What unparalleled ingratitude were it, what monstrous wickedness, that after he hath forgiven all our debt, because we desired him yet we should not have compassion on our fellow servants even as he had pity on us! O! what a dreadful sound will that be in the ears of many Christians, "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all thy debt, because thou desiredst me! Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servants, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts

forgive not every one his brother their trespasses," Mat. 18:32-35. When we cannot dispense with one penny, how should he dispense with his talents? And when we cannot pardon ten, how should he forgive ten thousand? When he hath forgiven my brother all his iniquity, may not I pardon one? Shall I impute that which God will not impute, or discover that which God hath covered? How should I expect he should be merciful to me, when I cannot shew mercy to my brother? Psa. 18:25. "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful." Shall I, for one or few offences, hate, bite, and devour him for whom Christ died, and loved not his life to save him? Rom. 14:15 and 1 Cor. 8:11.

'In the next place,' if a Christian do but take an impartial view of himself, he cannot but thus reason himself to a meek, composed, and affectionate temper towards other brethren. What is it in another that offends me, when if I do search within, I will not either find the same, or worse, or as evil in myself? Is there a mote in my brothers eye? Perhaps there may be a beam in my own; and why then should I look to the mote that is in my brother's eye? (Mat. 7:3). When I look inwardly, I find a desperately wicked heart, which lodges all that iniquity I beheld in others. And if I be not so sensible of it, it is because it is also deceitful above all things, and would flatter me in mine own eyes, Jer. 17:9. If my brother offend me in some things, how do these vanish^a out of sight in the view of my own guiltiness before God, and of the abominations of my own heart, known to his holiness and to my conscience? Sure I cannot see so much evil in my brother as I find in myself. I see but his outside. But I know my own heart; and whenever I retire within this, I find the sea of corruption so great, that I wonder not at the streams which break forth in others. But all my wonder is that God hath set bounds to it in me or in any. Whenever I find my spirit rising against the infirmities of others, and my mind swelling over them, I repress myself with this thought, "I myself also am a man," as Peter said to Cornelius when he would have worshipped him (Act. 10:26). As he restrained another's idolizing of him, I may cure my own self idolizing heart. Is it any thing strange that weak men fail, and sinful men fall? Is not all flesh grass, and all the perfection and goodliness of it as the flower of the field?

a. Old English: to vanish or escape perception.

Isa. 40:6. Is not every man at his best estate altogether vanity? Psa. 39:5. Is not man's breath in his nostrils? Isa. 2:22. And am not I myself a man? Therefore I will not be high minded but fear, Rom. 11:20. I will not be moved to indignation, but provoked to compassion, knowing that I myself am compassed with infirmities, Heb. 5:2.

'Secondly,' as a man may persuade himself to charity by the examination of his own heart and ways, so he may enforce upon his spirit a meek and compassionate stamp, by the consideration of his own frailty, what he may fall into. This is the Apostle's rule, Gal. 6:1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual," and pretend to it, "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Do not please yourselves with a false notion of zeal, thinking to cover your impertinent rigidity by it. Do as you would do if your own arm were disjoined. Set it in, restore it tenderly and meekly, considering yourselves that ye also may be tempted. Some are more given to reproaching and insulting than mindful of restoring. Therefore their reproofs are not tempered with oil that they may not break the head, but mixed with gall and vinegar to set on edge the teeth. But whenever thou lookest upon the infirmities of others, then consider thyself first, before you pronounce sentence on them, and thou shalt be constrained to bestow that charity to others which thou hast need of thyself. "Veniam petimusque damusque vicissim."^a If a man have need of charity from his brother, let him not be hard in giving it. If he know his own weakness and frailty, sure he may suppose such a thing may likely fall out that he may be tempted and succumb in it. For there needs nothing for the bringing forth of sin in any but occasion and temptation, as the bringing of fire near gunpowder. And truly he who had no allowance of love to give to an infirm and weak brother, he will be in "mala fide"^b, in an evil capacity, to seek what he would not give. Now the fountain of uncharitable and harsh dealing is imported in the 3rd verse, "If any man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Since all mortal men are nothing, vanity, altogether vanity, and less than vanity, he that would seem something, and seems so to himself, deludes himself. Hence is our insulting fierceness, hence

a. "We grant and solicit in our turn this indulgence."

b. "In bad faith." (H&F)

our supercilious rigour. Every man apprehends some excellency in himself beyond another. Take away pride, and charity shall enter, and modesty shall be its companion. But now we mock ourselves, and deceive ourselves, by building the weight of our pretended zeal upon such a vain and rotten foundation, as a gross practical fundamental lie of self conceit of nothing. Now the Apostle furnishes us with an excellent remedy against this in the 4th verse, "Let a man prove himself and his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." - a word worthy to be fastened by the Master of assemblies in the heart of all Christians! And indeed this nail driven in would drive out all conceit. Hence is our ruin, that we compare ourselves among ourselves, and in so doing we are not wise, 2 Cor. 10:12. For we know not our own true value. Only we raise the price according to the market, so to speak. We measure ourselves by another man's measure, and build up our estimation upon the disesteem of others, and how much others displease, so much we please ourselves. But, says the Apostle, let every man prove his own work, search his own conscience, compare himself to the perfect rule; and then, if he find all well, he may indeed glory of himself. But that which thou hast by comparison with others is not thine own. Thou must come down from all such advantages of ground, if thou would have thy just measure. And indeed, if thou prove thyself and thy work after this manner, thou wilt be the first to reprove thyself, thou shalt have that glory due unto thee, that is none at all. For every man shall bear his own burden, when he appears before the judgment seat of God. There is no place for such imaginations and comparisons in the Lord's judgment.

'Thirdly,' when a Christian looks within his own heart, he finds an inclination and desire to have the love of others, even though his conscience witness that he deserves it not. He finds an approbation of that good and righteous command of God, that others should love him. Now hence he may persuade himself, - Is it so sweet and pleasant to me to be loved of others, even though I am conscious that I have wronged them? Hath it such a beauty in my eye, while I am the object of it? Why then should it be a hard and grievous burden to me to love others, though they have wronged me, and deserve it no more than I did? Why hath it not the same amiable aspect, when my brother is the object of it? Certainly no reason

for it, but because I am yet carnal, and have not that fundamental law of nature yet distinctly written again upon my heart, "What ye would that others should do to you, do it to them," Mat. 7:12. If I be convinced that there is any equity and beauty in that command, which charges others to love me, forgive me, and forbear me, and restore me in meekness, why should it be a grievous command that I should pay that debt of love and tenderness to others? 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."

'In the third place,' consider to whom this affection should be extended. More generally to all men, as fellow creatures, but particularly and especially to all who are begotten of God, as fellow Christians. "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him," 1 John 4:21 and 5:1. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," Gal. 6:10. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee: but unto the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight," Psa. 16:2-3. And this consideration the Holy Spirit suggests to make us maintain love and unity. Love towards these runs in a purer channel, -"Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto the unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Pet. 1:22-23. We are begotten of one Father, and that by a divine birth, we have such a high descent and royal generation! There are so many other bonds of unity between us, it is absurd that this one more should not join all. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one body, one spirit, called to one hope, one God and Father of all," Eph. 4:2-6. All these being one, it is strange if we be not one in love. If so many relations beget not a strong and warm affection, we are worse than infidels, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Tim. 5:8. "If a man care not for his own house, his worldly interests, he is worse than an infidel," for he has a natural affection. Sure then this more excellent nature, a divine nature we are partakers of, cannot want affection

suitable to its nature. Christianity is a fraternity, a brotherhood, that should overpower all relations, bring down him of high degree, and exalt him of low degree; it should level all ranks, in this one respect, unto the rule of charity and love. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. There all differences of tongues and nations are drowned in this interest of Christ, Col. 3:11. "Thou hast hid those things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes," Luke 10:21. And "God hath chosen the weak and foolish to confound the mighty and wise," 1 Cor. 1:27. Behold all these outward privileges buried in the depths and riches of God's grace and mercy. Are we not all called to one high calling? Our common station is to war under Christ's banner against sin and Satan. Why then do we leave our station, forget our callings, and neglect that employment which concerns us all, and fall at odds with our fellow-soldiers, and bite and devour one another? Doth not this give advantage to our common enemies? While we consume the edge of our zeal and strength of our spirits one upon another, they must needs be blunted and weakened towards our deadly enemies. If our brother be represented unto us under the covering of many faults, failings, and obstinacy in his errors, or such like, if we can behold nothing but spots on his outside, while we judge after some outward appearance, then, I say, we ought to consider him again under another notion and relation, as he stands in Christ's account, as he is radically and virtually of that seed, which hath more real worth in it than all worldly privileges and dignities. Consider him as he once shall be, when mortality shall be put off. Learn to strip him naked of all infirmities in thy consideration, and imagine him to be clothed with immortality, and glory, and think how thou wouldest then love him. If either thou unclothe him of his infirmities, and consider him as vested now with the robe of Christ's righteousness, and all glorious within, or adorned with immortality and incorruption a little hence; or else, if thou clothe thyself with such infirmities as thou seest in him, and consider that thou art not less subject to failing, and compassed with infirmities, then thou shalt put on, and keep on, that bond of perfection, charity.

'Lastly,' let us consider the excellent nature of charity, and how it is interested in, and interwoven with all the royal and divine gifts and privileges of a Christian. All of them are not ashamed of kindred and cognation with charity. Is not the calling and profession of

a Christian honourable? Sure to any behoving soul it is above a monarchy; for it includes an anointing both to a royal and priestly office, and carries a title to a kingdom incorruptible and undefiled. Well then, charity is the symbol and badge of this profession, John 13:35. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Then, what is comparable to communion with God, and dwelling in him? Shall God indeed dwell with men, said Solomon? That exalts the soul to a royalty, and elevates it above mortality. "Quam contempta res est homo si supra humana se non exerat!" "How base and contemptible a thing is man, except he lift up his head above human things to heavenly and divine!" And then is the soul truly magnified while it is ascending to its own element, a divine nature. What more gracious than this, for a soul to dwell in God? And what more glorious than this, God to dwell in the soul? "Charitas te domum Domini facit, et Dominum domum tibi. Felix artifex charitas quæ conditori suo domum fabricare potest!" "Love makes the soul a house for the Lord, and makes the Lord a house to the soul. Happy artificer that can build a house for its master!" Love bringeth him, who is the chief among ten thousand, into the chambers of the heart. It lays him all night between its breasts; and is still emptying itself of all superfluity of naughtiness, and purging out all vanity and filthiness, that there may be more room for his Majesty. And then love dwells in God, in his love and grace, in his goodness and greatness. The secret of his presence it delights in. Now this mutual inhabitation, in which it is hard to say whether the Majesty of God does most descend, or the soul most ascend, whether he be more humbled or it exalted, this brotherly love, I say, is the evidence and assurance of it. "If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John 4:12, 16. For the love of the image of God in his children, is indeed the love of God whose image it is, and then is the love of God perfected, when it reacheth and extends from God to all that is God's, to all that hath interest in God - his commandments, (1 John 5:3. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous," 1 John 4:21, "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also,") his children, (1 John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of

God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten of him,") his creatures, (Mal. 2:10, "Hath not one God created us, why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?") The love of God being the formal, the special motive of love to our brethren, it elevates the nature of it, and makes it divine love. He that hath true Christian love, doth not only love and compassionate his brother, either because of its own inclination towards him, or his misery and necessity, or his goodness and excellency. These motives and grounds do not transcend mere morality, and so cannot beget a love which is the symptom of Christianity. If there be no other motives than these, we do not love so much for God as for ourselves; for compassion interesting itself with another man's misery, finds a kind of relief in relieving it. Therefore the will and good pleasure of God must be the rule of this motion, and the love of God must begin in it and continue it. And truly charity is nothing else but divine love in a state of condescent,^a so to speak, or the love of a soul to God manifested in the flesh. It is that love moving in a circle from God towards his creatures, and unto God again, as his love to the creatures begins in himself and ends in himself, 1 John 3:17. Is it not a high thing to know God aright? "This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John 17:3. That is a high note of excellency put on it, this makes the face of the soul to shine, now brotherly love evinceth this, that we know God, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love," 1 John 4:7-8. Love is real light, light and life, light and heat both. "When your fathers did execute judgment, and relieve the oppressed, etc. was not this to know me? saith the Lord," Jer. 22:15-16. The practice of the most common things, out of the love of God, and respect to his commands, is more real and true religion than the most profound and abstracted speculations of knowledge. Then only is God known, when knowledge stamps the heart with fear and reverence of his Majesty and love to his name, because then he is only known as he is a true and living God.

Love is real light and life. Is it not "a pleasant thing for the eye to

a. Or, condescendence.

behold the sun?" Light is sweet, and life is precious. These are two of the rarest jewels given to men. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now, and knoweth not whither he goeth; because darkness hath blinded his eyes, but he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him," 1 John 2:9-11. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death," 1 John 3:14. The light of Jesus Christ cannot shine into the heart, but it begets^a love, even as intense light begets heat, and where this impression is not made on the heart, it is an evidence that the beams of that Sun of righteousness have not pierced it. O how suitable is it for a child of light to walk in love! And wherefore is it made day light to the soul, but that it may rise up and go forth to labor, and exercise itself in the works of the day, duties of love to God and men? Now in such a soul there is no cause of stumbling, no scandal, no offence in its way to fall over. When the light and knowledge of Christ possesses the heart in love, there is no stumbling block of transgression in its way. It doth not fall and stumble at the commandments of righteousness and mercy as grievous, "therefore love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. 13:10. And so the way of charity is the most easy, plain, expedient, and safe way. In this way there is light shining all alongst it, and there is no stumbling block in it. For the love of God and of our brethren hath polished and made it all plain, hath "taken away the asperities^b and tumors of our affections and lusts." "Complanavit affectus."^c "Great peace have all they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Love makes an equable and constant motion, it moves swiftly and sweetly. It can loose many knots without difficulty, which other more violent principles cannot cut, it can melt away mountains before it, which cannot be hauled away. Albeit there be many stumbling blocks without in the world, yet there is none in charity, or in a charitable soul. None can enter into that soul to hinder it to possess itself in meekness and patience.

a. Or, without its begetting love.

b. The roughness or harshness. (H&F)

c. The meaning here is that grace working and influencing (affectus) the heart by love, razes or levels (complan) those things that are unseemly in the desires and affections.

Nothing can discompose it within, or hinder it to live peaceably with others. Though all men's hands be against it, yet charity is against none. It defends itself with innocence and patience. On the other hand, "He that hateth his brother is in darkness even till now." For if Christ's light had entered, then the love of Christ had come with it, and that is the law of love and charity. If Jesus Christ had come into the soul, he had restored the ancient commandment of love, and made it new again. As much of the want of love and charity, so much of the old ignorance and darkness remains. Whatsoever a man may fancy of himself that he is in the light, that he is so much advanced in the light, yet certainly this is a stronger evidence of remaining darkness, for it is a work of the darkest darkness, and murdering affection, suitable only for the night of darkness. And such a man knows not whither he goes, and must needs incur and fall upon many stumbling blocks within and without. It is want of love and charity that blinds the mind and darkens the heart, that it cannot see how to eschew and pass by scandals in others, but it must needs dash and break its neck upon them. Love is a light which may lead us by offences inoffensively, and without stumbling. In darkness men mistake the way, know not the end of it, take pits for plain ways, and stumble in them. Uncharitableness casts a mist over the actions and courses of others, and our own too, that we cannot carry on either without transgression. And this is the misery of it, that it cannot discern any fault in itself. It knows not whither it goeth, calls light darkness and darkness light. It is partial in judgment, pronounces always on its own behalf, cares not whom it condemn, that it may absolve itself.

Is there any privilege so precious as this, to be "the sons of God?" 1 John 3:2. What are all relations, or states, or conditions, to this one, to be the children of the Highest? It was David's question, "Should I be the king's son in law?" Alas! what a petty and poor dignity in regard of this, to be "the sons of God," partakers of a divine nature? All the difference of birth, all the distinction of degrees and qualities amongst persons, besides this one, are but such as have no being, no worth but in the fancy and construction of them. They really are nothing, and can do nothing. This only is a substantial and fundamental difference. A divine birth carries along with it a divine nature, a change of principles, from the worst to the best,

from darkness to light, from death to life. Now, imagine then, what excellency is in this grace, which is made the character of a son of God, of one begotten of the Father, and passed from death to life? 1 John 3:10, 14, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren, he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death." 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." And truly it is most natural, if it be so, that the children of our Father love each other dearly. It is monstrous and unnatural to see it otherwise. But besides, there is in this a great deal of resemblance of their Father, whose eminent and signal property it is, to be good to all and kind even to the unthankful, and whose incomparable glory it is to pardon iniquity, and suffer long patiently. A Christian cannot resemble his Father more nearly than in this. Why do we account that baseness in us which is glory to God? Are we ashamed of our birth, or dare we not own our Father? Shall we be ashamed to love them as brethren whom he hath not been ashamed to adopt as sons, and whom Christ is not ashamed to call brethren?



Chapter 4

The Duties of Christian Love

We shall not be curious in the ranking of the duties in which Christian love should exercise itself. All the commandments of the second table are but branches of it: they might be reduced all to the works of righteousness and of mercy. But truly these are interwoven through other. Though mercy uses to be restricted to the showing of compassion upon men in misery, yet there is a righteousness in that mercy, and there is mercy in the most part of the acts of righteousness, as in not judging rashly, in forgiving, etc. Therefore we shall consider the most eminent and difficult duties of love, which the word of God solemnly and frequently charges upon us in relation to others, especially these of the household of faith.

I conceive we would labor to enforce upon our hearts, and persuade our souls to a love of all men, by often ruminating upon the words of the Apostle, which enjoin us to “abound in love towards all men,” 1 Thes. 3:12. And this is so concerning, that he prays earnestly that the Lord would make them increase in it, and this we should pray for too. An affectionate disposition towards our common nature is not a common thing. Christianity enjoins it, and it is only true humanity, Luke 6:36-37. “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged, condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned, forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” Now in relation to all men, charity hath an engagement upon it to pray for all sorts of men, from that Apostolic command, 1 Tim 2:1: “I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.” Prayers and supplications, earnest prayers out of affection, should be poured out even for them that cannot, or do not pray for themselves. Wherefore are we taught to pray, but that we may be the mouth of others? And since an intercessor is given to us above, how are we bound to be intercessors for others below, and so to be affected with the

common mercies of the multitude, as to give thanks too! If man, by the law of creation, is the mouth of the stones, trees, birds, beasts, of heaven and earth, sun and moon and stars, how much more ought a Christian, a redeemed man, be the mouth of mankind to praise God for the abounding of his goodness, even towards these who are left yet in that misery and bondage that he is delivered from?

'Next,' Charity by all means will avoid scandal, and live honestly in the sight of all men. The Apostle says, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God," 1 Cor. 10:32. And he adds his own example, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved," 1 Cor. 10:33. Charity is not self addicted. It hath no humor to please. It can displease itself to profit others. I do verily think there is no point of Christianity less regarded. Others we acknowledge, but we fail in practice. This scarce hath the approbation of the mind. Few do conceive an obligation lying on them to it. But O how is Christianity, the most of it, humanity? Christ makes us men as well as Christians. He makes us reasonable men when believers. Sin transformed our nature into a wild, beastly, viperous, selfish thing. Grace restores reason and natural affection in the purest and highest strain. And this is reason and humanity, elevated and purified, - to condescend to all men in all things for their profit and edification, to deny itself to save others. Whatsoever is not necessary in itself, we ought not to impose a necessity upon it by our imagination and fancy, to the prejudice of a greater necessity, another's edification. Indeed charity will not, dare not sin to please men. That were to hate God, to hate ourselves, and to hate our brethren, under a base pretended notion of love. But I believe, addictedness to our own humors in things not necessary, which have no worth but from our disposition, doth oftener transport us beyond the bounds of charity than the apprehension of duty and conscience of sin. Some will grant they should be tender of offending the saints. But they do not conceive it is much matter what they do in relation to others, as if it were lawful to murder a Gentile more than a Christian. That is a bloody imagination, opposite to that innocent Christian, Paul, who says (Phil. 2:15), we should be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," among whom we should shine "as lights." And truly it

is humanity elevated by Christianity, or reason purified by religion, that is the light that shines most brightly in this dark world. And he says (in Col. 4:5), "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without," and (1 Thes. 4:12) "walk honestly toward them that are without," - avoiding all things, in our profession and carriage, which may alienate them from the love of the truth and godliness walking so, as we may insinuate into their hearts some apprehension of the beauty of religion. Many conceive, if they do good, all is well - if it be a duty, it matters nothing. But remember that caution, "Let not then your good be evil spoken of," Rom. 14:16. We would have our eyes upon that too, so to circumstantiate all our duties, as they may have least offence in them, and be exposed to least obloquy of men, 1 Pet. 2:12. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Then, 'Thirdly,' Charity follows peace with all men, as much as is possible, Heb. 12:14. "If it be possible as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," Rom. 12:18. Many spirits are framed for contention. If peace follow them, they will flee from it. But a Christian having made peace with God, the sweet fruit of that upon his spirit is to dispose him to a peaceable and quiet condescendency to others, and if peace flee from him, to follow after it, not only to entertain it when it is offered, but to seek it when it is away, and to pursue it when it runs away. (Psa. 34:14^a, which Peter urges upon Christians, 1 Pet. 3:8-11.) "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." I think, since we obtained the mercy to get a Peace maker between us and God, we should henceforth count ourselves bound to be peace makers among men. And truly such have a blessing pronounced upon them, Mat. 5:9. "Blessed are the peace makers." The Prince of peace pronounced it,

a. "Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it," Psa 34:14. (H&F)

and this is the blessedness, "they shall be called the children of God," because he is "the God of peace," and to resemble him in these, first in purity, then in peace, is a character of his image. It is true, peace will sometimes flee so fast, and so far away, as a Christian cannot follow it without sin, and that is breach of a higher peace. But charity, when it cannot live in peace without, doth then live in peace within, because it hath that sweet testimony of conscience, that, as far as did lie in it, peace was followed without. Divine wisdom (James 3:17), "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without wrangling and without hypocrisy." If wisdom be peaceable and not pure, it is but a carnal conspiracy in iniquity, earthly and sensual. But if it be pure it must be peaceable. For the wisdom descending from above hath a purity of truth, and a purity of love, and a purity of the mind and of the affection too. Where there is a purity of truth, but accompanied with envying, bitter strife, rigid judging, wrangling, and such like, then it is defiled and corrupted by the intermixture of vile and base affections, ascending out of the dunghill of the flesh. The vapors of our lusts arising up to the mind, do stain pure truth. They put an earthly, sensual, and devilish visage on it.

Charity, its conversation and discourse, is without judging, without censuring, Mat. 7:1. Of which chapter, because it contains much edification, I shall speak more hereafter. James 3:17, "Without partiality, without hypocrisy." The words in the original are, "αδιακριτος και αυποκριτος," (without judging and wrangling, and without hypocrisy), importing, that great censurers are often the greatest hypocrites, and sincerity has always much charity. Truly, there is much idle time spent this way in discourses of one another, and venting our judgments of others, as if it were enough of commendation for us to condemn others, and much piety to charge another with impiety. We should even be sparing in judging them that are without, 1 Cor. 5:12-13. Reflecting upon them or their ways, hath more provocation than edification in it. A censorious humor is certainly most partial to itself, and self indulgent. It can sooner endure a great beam in its own eye, than a little mote in its neighbor's, and this shows evidently that it is not the hatred of sin, or the love of virtue, which is the single and simple principle of it, but

self love, shrouded under the veil^a of displeasure at sin, and delight in virtue. I would think one great help to amend this, were to abate much from the superfluity and multitude of discourses upon others. "In the multitude of words there wants not sin," (Pro. 10:19) and in the multitude of discourses upon other men, there cannot miss the sin of rash judging. I find the saints and fearers of God commended for speaking often one to another, but not at all for speaking one of another. The subject of their discourse (Mal. 3:16.) certainly was of another strain, - how good it was to serve the Lord, etc. - opposite to the evil communication of others there registered.

Charity is no tale bearer. It goeth not about as a slander to reveal a secret, though true, Pro. 20:19. It is of a faithful spirit to conceal the matter, Pro. 11:13. Another man's good name is as a pledge laid down in our hand, which every man should faithfully restore, and take heed how he lose it, or alienate it by back-biting. Some would have nothing to say, if they had not other's faults and frailties to declaim upon, but it were better that such kept always silent, that either they had no ears to hear of them or know them, or had no tongues to vent them. If they do not lie grossly in it, they think they do no wrong. But let them judge it in reference to themselves. "A good name is better than precious ointment," (Ecc. 7:1) "and rather to be chosen than great riches," Pro. 12:1. And is that no wrong, to defile that precious ointment, and to rob or steal away that jewel more precious than great riches? There is a strange connection between these. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer, nor stand against the blood of thy neighbor," Lev. 19:16. It is a kind of murder, because it kills that which is as precious as life to an ingenuous heart. "The words of a tale bearer are as wounds, and they go down to the innermost parts of the belly," Pro. 18:8 and Pro. 26:22. They strike a wound to any man's heart, that can hardly be cured, and there is nothing that is such a seminary of contention and strife among brethren as this. It is the oil to feed the flame of alienation. "Take away a tale-bearer, and strife ceaseth," Prov. 26:20. Let there be but any (as there want not such who have no other trade or occupation), to whisper into the ears of brethren, and suggest evil apprehensions of them, they will separate chief friends, as we see it

a. Latin: a covering, a veil. (H&F)

in daily experience, Pro. 16:28. "Revilers" are amongst these who are excluded out of the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6:10. And therefore, as the Holy Spirit gives general precepts for the profitable and edifying improvement of the tongue, that so it may indeed be the glory of a man, (which truly is no small point of religion, as James expresses, James 3:2. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man,") so that same spirit gives us particular directions about this, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law;" (James 4:11) because he puts himself in the place of the Lawgiver, and his own judgment and fancy in the room of the law, and so judges the law. And therefore the Apostle Peter makes a wise and significant connection, 1 Pet. 2:1. "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakingings." Truly, evil speaking of our brethren, though it may be true, yet it proceeds out of the abundance of these, in the heart, of guile, hypocrisy, and envy. While we catch at a name of piety from censuring others, and build our own estimation upon the ruins of another's good name, hypocrisy and envy are too predominant. If we would indeed grow in grace by the word, and taste more how gracious the Lord is, we must lay these aside, and become as little children, without guile, and without gall. Many account it excuse enough, that they did not invent evil tales, or were not the first broachers of them; but the Scripture joins both together. The man that "shall abide in his tabernacle" must neither vent nor invent them, neither cast them down nor take them up, "He backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor;" (Psa. 15:3) or "receiveth not" or "endureth not", as in the margin. He neither gives it nor receives he it, hath not a tongue to speak of others' faults, nor ear to hear them. Indeed he hath a tongue to confess his own, and an ear open to hear another confess his faults, according to that precept, "Confess your faults one to another." We are forbidden to have much society or fellowship with tale-bearers; and it is added, Pro. 20:19, "And meddle not with such as flatter with their mouth," as indeed commonly they who reproach the absent, flatter the present; a backbiter is a face-flatterer. And therefore we should not only not meddle with them, but drive them away as enemies to human society. Charity would in such a case protect

itself, if I may so say, by "an angry countenance," an appearance of anger and real dislike. "As the north wind drives away rain," so that entertainment would drive away a "backbiting tongue," Pro. 25:23. If we do discountenance it, backbiters will be discouraged to open their pack of news and reports: and indeed the receiving readily of evil reports of brethren, is a partaking with the unfruitful works of darkness, which we should rather reprove, Eph. 5:11. To join with the teller is to complete the evil report; for if there were no receiver there would be no teller, no tale-bearer. "Charity covers a multitude of sins," 1 Pet. 4:8; and therefore "above all things have fervent charity among yourselves," says he. What is above prayer and watching unto the end, above sobriety? Indeed, in reference to fellowship with God, these are above all; but in relation to comfortable fellowship one with another in this world, this is above all, and the crown or cream of other graces. He whose sins are covered by God's free love, cannot think it hard to spread the garment of his love over his brother's sins. Hatred stirreth up strife, all uncharitable affections, as envy, wrath. It stirreth up contentions, and blazeth abroad men's infirmities. But "love covereth all sins," concealeth them from all to whom the knowledge of them doth not belong, Pro. 10:12. Love in a manner suffers not itself to know what it knoweth, or at least to remember it much. It will sometimes hoodwink itself to a favorable construction. It will pass by an infirmity and misken^a it, but many stand still and commune with it. But he that covereth a transgression seeks love to bury offences in. Silence is a notable mean to preserve concord, and beget true amity and friendship. The keeping of faults long above ground unburied, doth make them cast forth an evil savor that will ever part friends. Therefore, says the wise man, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love: but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends," Pro. 17:9. Covering faults Christianly, will make a stranger a friend; but repeating and blazing of them will make a friend not only a stranger, but an enemy. Yet this is nothing to the prejudice of that Christian duty of reproof and admonishing one another, Eph. 5:11. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Love commands to reprove in the "spirit of meekness," (Gal. 6:1.) as a man would restore an arm out of joint. And therefore thou "shall not hate him in thy heart, but shall

a. Overlook it.

in any ways reprove him, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. 19:17. And he that reproves his brother after this manner from love, and in meekness and wisdom, "shall afterward find more favour of him than he that flatters with his tongue," Pro. 28:23. To cover grudges and jealousies in our hearts, were to nourish a flame in our bosom, which doth but wait for a vent, and will at one occasion or other burst out. But to look too narrowly to every step, and to write up a register of men's mere frailties, especially so as to publish them to the world; that is inconsistent with the rule of love. And truly, it is a token of one "destitute of wisdom to despise his neighbor; but a man of understanding will hold his peace." He that has most defects himself, will find maniest^a in others, and strive to vilify them one way or other; but a wise man can pass by frailties, yea, offences done to him, and be silent, Pro. 11:12.

a. Most.



Chapter 5

Christian Love springs of Humility

Humility is the root of charity, and meekness the fruit of both. There is no solid and pure ground of love to others, except the rubbish of self-love be first cast out of the soul; and when that superfluity of naughtiness is cast out, then charity hath a solid and deep foundation: "The end of the command is charity out of a pure heart," 1 Tim. 1:5. It is only such a purified heart, cleansed from that poison and contagion of pride and self-estimation, that can send out such a sweet and wholesome stream, to the refreshing of the spirits and bowels of the church of God. If self-glory and pride have deep roots fastened into the soul, they draw all the sap and virtue downward, and send little or nothing up to the tree of charity, which makes it barren and unfruitful in the works of righteousness, and fruits of mercy and meekness. There are obstructions in the way of that communication, which only can be removed by the plucking up of these roots of pride and self-estimation, which prey upon all, and incorporate all in themselves, and yet, like the lean kine that had devoured the fat, are never the fatter or more well-favoured.

It is no wonder, then, that these are the first principles that we must learn in Christ's school, the very A, B, C of Christianity: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Mat. 11:29. This is the great Prophet sent of the Father into the world to teach us, whom he hath, with a voice from heaven, commanded us to hear: "This is my well-beloved Son, hear him." Should not the fame and report of such a Teacher move us? He was testified of very honourably, long before he came, that he had the Spirit above measure, that he had "the tongue of the learned;" (Isa. 50:4) that he was a greater prophet than Moses, (Deut. 18:15, 18) that is, the wonderful Counsellor of heaven and earth, (Isa. 9:6) the "Witness to the people," a Teacher and "Leader to the people." And then, when he came, he had the most glorious testimony from the

most glorious persons, - the Father and the Holy Spirit, - in the most solemn manner that ever the world heard of, Mat. 17:5. "Behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Now, this is our Master, our Rabbi, Mat. 23:8. This is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (Heb. 3:1); "the light of the world and life of men," John 8:12 and John 7:33, 51. Having, then, such a Teacher and Master, sent us from heaven, may we not glory in our Master? But some may suppose, that he who came down from heaven, filled with all the riches and treasures of heavenly wisdom, should reveal in his school unto his disciples, all the mysteries and profound secrets of nature and art, about which the world hath ploded^a since the first taste of the tree of knowledge, and beaten out their brains to the vexation of all their spirits, without any fruit, but the discovery of the impossibility of knowing, and the increase of sorrow by searching. Who would not expect, when the Wisdom of God descends among men, but that he should show unto the world that wisdom, in the understanding of all the works of God, which all men have been pursuing in vain; that he by whom all things were created, and so could unbowel^b and manifest all their hidden causes and virtues, all their admirable and wonderful qualities and operations, as easily by a word, as he made them by a word; who would not expect, I say, but that he should have made this world, and the mysteries of it, the subject of all his lessons, the more to illustrate his own glorious power and wisdom? And yet behold, they who had come into his school and heard this Master and Doctor teach his scholars, they who had been invited to come, through the fame and report of his name, would have stood astonished and surprised to hear the subject of his doctrine; one come from on high to teach so low things as these, "Learn of me, I am meek and lowly." Other men that are masters of professions, and authors of sects or orders, do aspire unto some singularity in doctrine to make them famous. But behold our Lord and Master, this is the doctrine he vents! It hath nothing in it that sounds high, and looks big in the estimation of the world. In regard of the wisdom of the world, it is foolishness, a doctrine of humility from the most High! A lesson of lowliness and meekness from the Lord and Maker

a. From plod, to study with diligence. (H&F)

b. To search the bowels, to reveal the interior. (H&F)

of all! There seems, at first, nothing in it to allure any to follow it. Who would travel so far as the college of Christianity to learn no more but this, when every man pretends to be a teacher of it?

But truly there is a majesty in this lowliness and there is a singularity in this commonness. If ye would stay and hear a little longer, and enter into a deep search of this doctrine, we would be surcharged and overcome with wonders. It seems shallow till ye enter but it has no bottom. Christianity makes no great noise, but it runs the deeper. It is a light and overly knowledge of it, a small smattering of the doctrine of it, that makes men despise it and prefer other things, but the deep and solid apprehension of it will make us adore and admire, and drive us to an "O altitudo!" "O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Rom. 11:33. As the superficial knowledge of nature makes men atheists, but the profound understanding of it makes men pious so all other things, "vilescit scientia", "grow more contemptible by the knowledge of them." It is ignorance of them which is the mother of that devout admiration we bear to them. But Christianity only, "vilescit ignorantia, clarescit scientia", is common and base, because not known. And that is no disparagement at all unto it, that there is none despises it, but he that knoweth it not, and none can do any thing, but despise all besides it that once knows it. That is the proper excellency and glory of it.

All arts and sciences have their principles, and common axioms of unquestionable authority. All kind of professions have some fundamental doctrines and points which are the character of them. Christianity hath its principles too. And principles must be plain and uncontroverted; they must be evident by their own light, and apt to give light to other things. All the rest of the conclusions of the art are but derivations and deductions from them. Our Master and Doctor follows the same method. He lays down some common principles some fundamental points of this profession, upon which all the building of Christianity hangs. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." This was the high lesson that his life preached so exemplarily, and his doctrine pressed so earnestly, and in this he is very unlike other teachers who impose burdens on others, and themselves do not so much as touch them. But he first practises his doctrine and then preaches it. He first casts a pattern in himself, and then presses

to follow it. Examples teach better than rules, but both together are most effectual and sure. The rarest example and noblest rule that ever was given to men are here met together.

The rule is about a thing that has a low name, but a high nature. Lowliness and meekness in reputation and outward form, are like servants, yet they account it no robbery to be equal with the highest and most princely graces. The vein of gold and silver lies very low in the bowels of the earth, but it is not therefore base, but the more precious. Other virtues may come with more observation, but these, like the Master that teaches them, come with more reality. If they have less pomp, they have more power and virtue. Humility, how suitable is it to humanity! They are as near of kin one to another, as "homo" and "humus," and therefore, except a man cast off humanity, and forget his original, the ground, the dust from whence he was taken, I do not see how he can shake off humility. Self knowledge is the mother of it, the knowledge of that "humus" would make us "humiles."^a Look to the hole of the pit from whence thou art hewn. A man could not look high that looked so low as the pit from whence we were taken by nature, even the dust, and the pit from whence we are hewn by grace, even man's lost and ruined state. Such a low look would make a lowly mind. Therefore pride must be nothing else but an empty and vain tumor, a puffing up. "Knowledge puffeth up," (1 Cor. 8:1) not self knowledge. That casts down, and brings down all superstructures, razes out all vain confidence to the very foundation, and then begins to build on a solid ground. But knowledge of other things without, joined with ignorance of ourselves within, is but a swelling, not a growing, it is a bladder or skin full of wind, a blast or breath of an airy applause or commendation, will extend it and fill it full. And what is this else but a monster in humanity, the skin of a man stuffed or blown up with wind and vanity, to the shadow and resemblance of a man; but no bones or sinews, nor real substance within? Pride is an excrescence. It is nature swelled beyond the intrinsic terms or limits of magnitude, the spirit of a mouse in a mountain. And now, if any thing be gone without the just bounds of the magnitude set to it, it is imperfect, disabled in its operations, vain and unprofitable, yea, prodigious like. If there be not so much

a. That is, "humble beings.

real excellency as may fill up the circle of our self estimation, then surely it must be full of emptiness and vanity, fancy and imagination must supply the vacant room, where solid worth cannot extend so far. Now, I believe, if any man could but impartially and seriously reflect upon himself, he would see nothing of that kind, no true solid and real dignity to provoke love, but real baseness and misery to procure loathing. There is a lie in every sin, but the greatest and grossest lie is committed in pride, and attribution of that excellency to ourselves which is not. And upon what erroneous fancy, which is a sandy and vain foundation, is built the tower of self estimation, vain gloriation^a, and such like? Pride, which is the mother of these, says most presumptuously, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent," (Isa. 10:13), "I am and none else besides me," Isa. 47:10. It is such a false imagination, as "I am of perfect beauty," "I am and none else," "I am a god," (Eze. 27:3 and Eze. 28:2) which swells and lifts up the heart. Now what a vain thing is it, an inordinate elevation of the heart upon a false misapprehension of the mind? The "soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him," Hab. 2:4. It must be a tottering building that is founded on such a gross mistake.

Some cover their pride with the pretence of high spiritedness, and please themselves in apprehensions of some magnanimity and generosity. But the truth is, it is not true magnitude, but a swelling out of the superabundance of pestilent humors. True greatness of spirit is inwardly and throughout solid, firm from the bottom, and the foundation of it is truth. Which of the two do ye think hath the better spirit, he that calls dust, dust, and accounts of dung as dung, or he that, upon a false imagination, thinks dust and dung is gold and silver, esteems himself a rich man, and raises up himself above others? Humility is only true magnanimity, for it digs down low, that it may set and establish the foundation of true worth. It is true, it is lowly, and bows down low. But as the water that comes from a height, the lower it comes down the higher it ascends up again, so the humble spirit, the lower it fall in its own estimation, the higher it is raised in real worth and in God's estimation. "He that humbles himself shall be exalted, and he that exalts himself shall be

a. Or, vain glorification. (H&F)

abased," Mat. 23:12. He is like a growing tree, the deeper the roots go down in the earth, the higher the tree grows above ground, as Jacob's ladder, the foot of it is fastened in the earth, but the top of it reaches the heaven. And this is the sure way to ascend to heaven. Pride would fly up upon its own wings. But the humble man will enter at the lowest step, and so goes up by degrees, and in the end is made manifest. Pride catches a fall,^a and humility is raised on high; it descended that it might ascend. "A man's pride shall bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit," Pro. 29:23. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." But "before honor is humility," Pro. 14:18 and Pro. 18:12. The first week of creation, as it were, afforded two signal examples of this wise permutation^b of divine justice, angels cast out of heaven, and man out of paradise, a high and wretched aim at wisdom brought both as low as hell. The pride of angels and men was but the rising up to a height, or climbing up a steep to the pinnacle of glory, that they might catch the lower fall. But the last week of the creation, to speak so, shall afford us rare and eminent demonstrations of the other, poor, wretched, and miserable sinners lifted up to heaven by humility, when angels were thrown down from heaven for pride. What a strange sight, an angel, once so glorious, so low, and a sinner, once so wretched and miserable, so high! Truly may any man conclude within himself, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud," Pro. 16:19. Happy lowliness, that is the foundation of true highness! "But miserable highness that is the beginning of eternal baseness." "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Mat. 5:3. Blessedness begins low, in poverty of spirit. And Christ's sermon upon blessedness begins at it, but it arises in the end to the riches of a kingdom, a heavenly kingdom. Grace is the seed of glory, and poverty of spirit is the seed, first dead before it be quickened to grow up in fruits. And indeed the grain "is not quickened except it die," (1 Cor. 15:36) and then it gets a body, and "bringeth forth much fruit," John 12:24. Even so, grace is sown into the heart, but it is not quickened except it die in humility, and then God gives it a body,

a. The appropriate end of pride is a fall; this it obtains or catches for itself. (H&F)

b. Or, transformation. (H&F)

when it springs up in other beautiful graces, of meekness, patience, love, etc. But these are never ripe till the day that the soul get the warm beams of heaven, being separated from the body, and then is the harvest a rich crop of blessedness. Holiness is the ladder to go up to happiness by, or rather our Lord Jesus Christ as adorned with all these graces. Now these are the steps of it, mentioned Mat. 5, and the lowest step that a soul first ascends to him by, is poverty of spirit, or humility. And truly the spirit cannot meet with Jesus Christ till he first bring it down low, because he hath come so low himself, as that no soul can ascend up to heaven by him, except they bow down to his lowliness, and rise upon that step.

Now a man being thus humbled in spirit before God, and under his mighty hand, he is only fit to obey the apostolic precept "Be ye all of you subject one to another," 1 Pet. 5:5. Humility towards men depends upon that poverty and self emptying under God's mighty hand, ver. 6. It is only a lowly heart that can make the back to bow, and submit to others of whatsoever quality, and condescend to them of low degree, Rom. 12:16, Eph. 5:21. But the fear of the Lord humbling the spirit will easily set it as low as any other can put it. This is the only basis and foundation of Christian submission and moderation. It is not a complemental condescendence. It consists not in an external show of gesture and voice. That is but an apish imitation. And indeed pride often will palliate^a itself under voluntary shows of humility, and can demean itself to undecent and unseemly submissions to persons far inferior, but it is the more deformed and hateful, that it lurks under some shadows of humility. As an ape is the more ugly and ill favoured that it is liker^b a man, because it is not a man, so vices have more deformity in them when they put on the garb and vizard^c of virtue. Only it may appear how beautiful a garment true humility is, when pride desires often to be covered with the appearance of it, to hide its nakedness. O how rich a clothing is the mean-like garment of humility and poverty of spirit! "Be ye

a. Hide its evil intention by a show of humility, as in the Psalm: "He lieth in wait secretly as a lion ... He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the helpless may fall by his strength. Psa 10:9-10. (H&F)

b. Similar to a man. (H&F)

c. Disguise or mask. (H&F)

clothed with humility," 1 Pet. 5:5. It is the ornament of all graces. It covers a man's nakedness by uncovering of it^a. If a man had all other endowments, this one dead fly, would make all the ointment unsavory, pride. But humility is "condimentum virtutum," as well as "vestimentum."^b It seasons all graces, and covers all infirmities. Garments are for ornament and necessity both. Truly this clothing is alike fit for both, to adorn and beautify whatsoever is excellent, and to hide or supply whatsoever is deficient: "ornamentum et operimentum".^c

The Apostle Paul gives a solemn charge to the Romans (Rom. 12:3), that no man should think high of himself; but soberly, according to the measure of faith given. That extreme undervaluing and denial of all worth in ourselves, though it be suitable before God (Luke 17:6-7, 10, Pro. 30:2-3, Job 42:6, 1 Cor. 3:7), yet is uncomely and incongruous before men. Humility doth not exclude all knowledge of any excellency in itself, or defect in another, it can discern, but this is the worth of it: that it thinks soberly of the one, and despises not the other. The humble man knows any advantage he has beyond another, but he is not wise in his own conceit. He looks not so much upon that side of things, his own perfections and others' imperfections. That is very dangerous. But he casts his eye most on the other side, his own infirmities and others' virtues, his worst part and their best part, and this makes up an equality or proportion. Where there is inequality, there is a different measure of gifts and graces, there are diverse failings and infirmity, and degrees of them. Now, how shall so unequal members make up one body, and join unto one harmonious being, except this proportion be kept, that the defects of one be made up by the humility of another? The difference and inequality is taken away this way, by fixing my eye most upon my own disadvantages and my brother's advantages.

a. Not 'uncovering' in an unseemly sense but in a impoverishing sense; he who knows his own humility is one whose sins and faults are plainly before him: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" 2 Cor. 5:4. (H&F)

b. Humility is "the seasoning of the virtues," as well as "the garb."

c. That is, "an ornament and covering."

If I be higher in any respect, yet certainly I am lower in some, and therefore the unity of the body may be preserved by humility. I will consider in what I come short, and in what another excels, and so I can condescend to them of low degree. This is the substance of that which is subjoined. Rom. 12:16, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." And this makes us meet in honour to prefer one another, taking ourselves up in the notion of what evil is in us, and another up in the notion of what good is in him. Rom. 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." Thus there may be an equality of mutual respect and love, where there is an inequality of gifts and graces, there may be one measure of charity, where there are different measures of faith, because both neglect that difference, and pitch upon their own evils and another's good.

It is our custom to compare ourselves among ourselves, and the result of that secret comparison is estimation of ourselves, and despising others. We take our measure, not by our own real and intrinsic qualifications, but by the stature of other men's, and if we find any disadvantage in others, or any pre-eminence in ourselves, in such a partial application and collation of ourselves with others (as readily self love, if it find it not, will fancy it), then we have a tacit gloriation^a within ourselves, and a secret complacency in ourselves. But the humble Christian dares not make himself of that number, nor boast of things without his measure. He dare not think himself good, because, "deterioribus melior", "better than others who are worse." But he judges himself by that intrinsic measure which God hath distributed unto him, and so finds reason of sobriety and humility, and therefore he dare not stretch himself beyond his measure, or go without his station and degree, 2 Cor. 10:12-14. Humility makes a man compare himself with the best, that he may find how bad he himself is. But pride measures by the worst, that it may hide from a man his own imperfections. The one takes a perfect rule, and finds itself nothing. The other takes a crooked rule, and imagines itself something. But this is the way that unity may be kept in the body, if all the members keep this method and order, the lowest

a. Or, unspoken glorification. (H&F)

to measure by him that is higher, and the higher to judge himself by him that is yet above him, and he that is above all the rest, to compare with the rule of perfection, and find himself further short of the rule than the lowest is below him. If our comparisons did thus ascend, we would descend in humility, and all the different degrees of persons would meet in one centre of lowliness of mind. But while our rule descends, our pride ascends. The scripture holds out pride and self estimation as the root of many evils, and humility as the root of many good fruits among men. "Only through pride comes contention," Pro. 13:10. There is pride at least in one of the parties, and often in both. It makes one man careless of another, and out of contempt not to study equity and righteousness towards him, and it makes another man impatient of receiving and bearing an injury or disrespect. While every man seeks to please himself, the contention arises. Pride in both parties makes both stiff and inflexible to peace and equity, and in this there is a great deal of folly. For, by this means, both procure more real displeasure and dissatisfaction to their own spirits. "But with the well advised is wisdom." They who have discretion and judgment will not be so wedded to their own conceits, but that in humility they can forbear and forgive for peace' sake. And though this seem harsh and bitter at first, to a passionate and distempered mind, yet O how sweet is it after! There is a greater sweetness and refreshment in the peaceable condescendence of a man's spirit, and in the quiet passing by any injury, than the highest satisfaction that ever revenge or contention gave to any man. "When pride comes, then comes shame, but with the lowly is wisdom," Pro. 11:2. Pride groweth to maturity and ripeness. Shame is near hand it, almost as near as the harvest. If pride come up, shame is in the next rank behind it. But there is a great wisdom in lowliness. That is, the honorable society that it walks in. There may be a secret connection between this and the former verse, "divers and false balances are abomination to the Lord, but a just balance is his delight," (Pro 11:1). Now, if it be so in such low things as merchandise, how much more abominable is a false spiritual balance in the weighing of ourselves! Pride hath a false balance in its hand, the weight of self love carries down the one scale by far.

Lowliness of mind is the strongest bond of peace and charity. It banishes away strife and vain glory, and makes each man to esteem

another better than himself, (Phil. 2:3) because the humble man knows his own inside, and only another's outside. Now certainly the outside is always better and more specious than the inside, and therefore a humble man seeing nothing but his neighbor's outside, and being acquainted thoroughly with his own inside, he esteems another better than himself. Humility, as it makes a man to think well of another, so it hinders him to speak evil of his brother. James 4. He lays down the ground work in the 10th verse, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." He raises his superstructure, verses 11-12: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law, but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another?" For truly the very ground of evil speaking of that nature, is some advantage, we conceive, that may redound to our own reputation, by the diminution of another's fame. Or, because we are so short sighted in ourselves, therefore we are sharp sighted towards others, and because we think little of our own faults, we are ready to aggravate other men's to an extremity. But in so doing we take the place of the judge and law upon us, which judges others, and is judged by none. So we judge others, and not ourselves. Neither will we suffer ourselves to be judged by others. This is to make ourselves the infallible rule, to judge the law.

Humility levels men to a holy subjection and submission to another, without the confusion of their different degrees and stations. It teaches men to give that respect and regard to even one that is due to his place or worth, and to signify it in such a way as may testify the simplicity of their estimation, and sincerity of their respect. Eph. 5:21, "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God." 1 Pet. 5:5, "All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." Now, if humility can put a man below others, certainly it will make him endure patiently and willingly to be placed in that same rank by others. When others give him that place to sit into, that he had chosen for himself, will he conceive himself wronged and affronted, though others about him think so? Nay, it is hard to persuade him of an injury of that kind, because the apprehension of such an affront hath for its foundation the imagination of some excellency beyond

others, which lowliness hath razed out. He hath placed himself so low for every man's edification and instruction, that others can put him no lower, and there he sits quietly and peaceably. "Bene qui latuit bene vixit."^a Affronts and injuries fly over him, and light upon the taller cedars, while the shrubs are safe.

"Qui cadit in plano, (vix hoc tamen evenit ipsum,) Sic cadit, ut tacta surgere possit humo."^b

He sits so low, that he cannot fall lower, so a humble man's fall upon the ground is no fall indeed, but in the apprehension of others, but it is a heavy and bruising fall from off the tower of self conceit.

Now the example that is given us, "Learn of me,"^c is certainly of greater force to persuade a man to this humble, composed, and quiet temper of spirit, than all the rules in the world. That the Son of God should come down and act it before our eyes, and cast us a pattern of humility and meekness, if this do not prevail to humble the heart, I know not what can. Indeed this root of bitterness, which is in all men's hearts by nature, is very hard to pluck up, yea, when other weeds of corruption are extirpated this poisonous^d one, pride groweth the faster, and roots the deeper. Suppose a man should be stripped naked of all the garments of the old man, this would be certainly nearest his skin and last to put off. It is so pestilent an evil, that it grows in the glass window as well as on the dunghill and, which is strange, it can spring out of the heart, and take moisture and aliment^e from humility, as well as from other graces. A man is in hazard to wax proud that he is not proud, and to be high minded because he is lowly. Therefore, it is not good to reflect much upon

a. He who is lowly lives well. (H&F)

b. "He who falls on a smooth surface, (yet this rarely happens,) falls in such a way that he can rise again from the ground he has touched."

c. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Mat 11:29. (H&F)

d. Bitterness is said to be poisonous in that it is said to have the power to defile others: "Looking diligently ... lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled," Heb 12:15. (H&F)

e. Nourishment. (H&F)

our own graces, no more than for a man to eat much honey.

I know not any antidote so sovereign as the example of Jesus Christ, to cure this evil, and he himself often proposes this receipt to his disciples, (John 13:13-17) "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Mat. 11:29-30, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Mat. 20:27-28, "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Might not that sound always in our ears, the servant is not above his lord, the "Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister?" O whose spirit would not that compose? What apprehension of wrong would it not compensate? What flame of contention about worth and respect would it not quench? What noise of tumultuous passions would it not silence? Therefore, the Apostle of the Gentiles prescribes this medicine, (Phil. 2:5-8) "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." If he did humble himself out of charity, who was so high, how should we humble ourselves, both out of charity and necessity, who are so low! If we knew ourselves, it were no strange thing that we were humble, the evidence of truth would extort it from us. But here is the wonder, that he who knew himself to be equal to God, should notwithstanding become lower than men, that the Lord of all should become the servant of all, and the King of glory make himself of no reputation! That he pleased to come down lowest, who knew himself to be the highest of all, no necessity could persuade it, but charity and love hath done it. Now, then, how monstrous and ugly a thing must pride be after this! That the dust should raise itself, and a

worm swell, that wretched, miserable man should be proud, when it please the glorious God to be humble, that absolute necessity shall not constrain to this, that simple love persuaded him to! How doth this heighten and elevate humility, that such an one gives out himself, not only as the teacher, but as the pattern of it. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

~ FINIS ~

