

THE THREE DIVINE SISTERS:

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity.—1 Cor. XIII 13.

WHEN those three goddesses, say the poets, strove for the golden ball, Paris adjudged it to the queen of Love. Here are three celestial graces, in a holy emulation, if I may so speak, striving for the chiefdom ; and our Apostle gives it to love. 'The greatest of these is charity.'

Not that other daughters are black, but that Charity excels in beauty. We may say of this sister, as it was said of the good woman, 'Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all,' Prov. xxxi. 29. Paul doth not disparage any when he saith, 'Charity is the greatest.' All stars are bright, though 'one star may differ from another in glory,' 1 Cor. xv. We may say of graces, as of the captains of the sons of Gad, 'The least a hundred, the greatest a thousand ;' or as the song was of Saul and David : 'Saul hath slain his thousands, David his ten thousands.' Faith is excellent, so is hope ; but 'the greatest of these is charity.'

Methinks these three theological virtues may not unfitly be compared to three great feasts which we celebrate in the year—Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas. Faith, like Easter, believes Christ dead for our sins, and risen again for our justification ; Hope, like Pentecost, waits for the coming of the Holy Ghost, God's free Spirit of grace, to come into us, and to bring us to heaven ; and Charity looks like Christmas, full of love to our neighbours, full of hospitality and mercy to the poor.

These are three strings often touched : faith, whereby we believe all God's promises to be true, and ours ; hope, whereby we wait for them with patience ; charity, whereby we testify what we believe and hope. He that hath faith cannot distrust ; he that hath hope cannot be put from anchor ; he that hath charity will not lead a licentious life, for 'love keeps the commandments.'

For method's sake, we might first confer them all, then prefer one. But I will speak of them according to the three degrees of comparison :—I. Positively ; II. Comparatively ; III. Superlatively : 'the greatest of these is charity.' Under which method we have involved—1. Their order, how they

are ranked; 2. Their nature, how they are defined; 3. Their distinction, how they are differenced; 4. Their number, how many are specified; 5. Their conference, how they are compared; 6. Lastly, their dignity, and therein how far one is preferred.

I. FAITH is that grace which makes Christ ours, and all his benefits. God gives it: 'Faith is given by the Spirit,' 1 Cor. xii. 9. By the word preached: 'Faith cometh by hearing,' Rom. x. 17. For Christ's sake: 'To you it is given for Christ's sake, to believe in his name,' Phil. i. 29. This virtue is no sooner given of God, but it gives God. So soon as thou believest, Christ is thine, and all his: 'For he that gives us Christ will also with him give us all things,' Rom. viii. 32.

'Without this it is impossible to please God,' Heb. xi. 6. Let us not otherwise dare to come into his presence. There is nothing but wrath in him, for sin in us. Joseph charged his brethren that they should come no more in his sight, unless they brought Benjamin with them. We come at our peril into God's presence if we leave his beloved Benjamin, our dear Jesus, behind us. When the philosopher heard of the enraged emperor's menace, that the next time he saw him he would kill him, he took up the emperor's little son in his arms, and saluted him with a *Potesme*, 'Thou canst not now strike me.' God is angry with every man for his sins. Happy is he that can catch up his Son Jesus; for in whose arms soever the Lord sees his Son, he will spare him. The men of Tyre were fain to intercede to Herod by Blastus, Acts xii. 20. Our intercession to God is made by a higher and surer way; not by his servant, but by his Son.

Now this Mediator is not had without a medium—faith. *Fides medium, d quo remedium*; faith is that means whereby we lay hold on this Christ. Diffidence shall never have Jesus for its advocate; though every man may say, 'I believe; Lord, help my unbelief.'

St Paul useth one word that very significantly expresseth faith, calling it 'the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1. *Fides est credere quod non vides; cujus merces est videre quod credis*.—Faith is to believe what thou seest not; whose reward is to see what thou believest. Now the metaphor may be explained thus:—

(1.) Christ dying made a will or a testament, sealing it with his own blood, wherein he bequeathed a certain legacy of inheritance to his brethren with himself: 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me,' John xvii. 24. This is the substance of his will and testament.

(2.) The conveyance of this will is the gospel: 'Whosoever believes, and is baptized, shall be saved.' A large patent, a free and full grant. There is no exception of persons, either in regard of state, quality, or country: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus,' Gal. iii. 28. The conveyance is of an ample latitude.

(3.) The executor or administrator of this will, if I may so speak, is the Holy Ghost, that Comforter which Christ promised to 'send, that should lead us into all truth,' John xiv. 16. This Spirit begets faith and sanctification in our hearts, puts 'Abba' into our mouths, applies the merits of our Saviour to our souls, and indeed 'seals us up to the day of redemption,' Eph. iv. 30. Without his assistance we could appropriate no comfort by his will, nor challenge any legacy therein bequeathed.

(4.) Lastly, The evidence whereby every particular man appertains to himself his title and interest, is his faith. Thou, unregenerate soul, pleadest

a legacy in this will. Go to, let us join issue, and come to trial. Where is thy evidence? Here it is; my faith. This evidence, as all other, must have some witnesses. Produce thine; and before the bar of the great Chief Justice, the King's Bench of heaven, let them not lie.

The first is thy conscience. Alas! give this leave to speak without interruption, and one day it shall not flatter thee. This saith, thy evidence is false and counterfeit, forged by a wretched scrivener, flesh and blood; for thy heart trusts in uncertainly good riches, or in certainly bad vanities, more than in the living God.

The next is thy life. Alas! this is so speckled with sins, so raw and sore with lusts, that as a body broken out into blains and boils argues a corrupted liver or stomach within, so the spots and ulcers of thy life demonstrate a putrefied heart. Lo, now thy witnesses. Thou art gone at the common law of justice; it is only the chancery of mercy that must clear thee. What wilt thou now do? What, but humble thyself in recompense for thy false faith; take prayer in thy company, for pardon of former errors; go by the word preached: for the minister is, as it were, the register to engrass the deed; and desire God on the humble knees of thy soul, to give thee a new and a true evidence? Let this instruct us to some uses.

Use 1.—Be sure that thy evidence is good. Satan is a subtle lawyer (and thou dost not doubt of his malice,) and will soon pick holes in it; find out tricks and cavils against it. He will winnow and sift thee, grain after grain: take heed, lest thou run not all to chaff. There is a faith of saints: 'Now live not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God,' Gal. ii. 20. And there is a faith of devils: 'Thou believest; thou doest well: the devils believe, and tremble,' James ii. 19. There is a faith which cannot perish: 'Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish,' John iii. 15. And there is a faith that in the time of temptation falls away. The rocky ground receives the word, and for a while believeth, but in the time of temptation falls away, Luke viii. 13. There is a faith which the world overcometh; such was the faith of Demas. And there is a faith that overcometh the world: 'This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith,' 1 John v. 4. There is a dead, idle, and infructuous faith, James ii. 14; and there is a lively, active, working faith: 'Faith worketh by love,' Gal. v. 6. Be sure, then, that thy faith will endure the touch, even the fiery trial.

Use 2.—Do not lose such a legacy as Christ hath bequeathed, for want or faith. Glorious is the inheritance; but where is thy evidence? Flatter not thy soul with hope of this possession, without the assurance of faith, 'Christ gives his life for his sheep.' What is this to thee that art a wolf, a swine, a goat? God dresseth his vineyard, pruneth it, is provident over it. What is this to thee that art a thorn, and no branch of the vine? Look thou to be weeded up, and thrown out. The blood of Christ runs fresh; but where is thy pipe of faith to derive it from his side to thy conscience? Say it should shower mercy, yet if thou wantest faith, all would fall besides thee. There would be no more favour for thee than if there was no Saviour.

Let, then, no miseries of earth, much less pleasures, quench thy faith. Satan seeing this spark of fire kindled in thy heart, would blow it out with storms, or work thee to smother it thyself with vanities, or to rake it up in the dead embers of cold security. But believe against sight and sense; as David prophesied that he should be a king. *Eo plus habet fides meriti, quo minus argumenti*,—Faith shall have so much the more recompense, as it had the less argument to induce it.

HOPE is the sweetest friend that ever kept a distressed soul company ; it beguiles the tediousness of the way, all the miseries of our pilgrimage.

'Jam mala finissem letho ; sed credula vitam
Spes fovet, et melius cras fore semper ait.'

Therefore, *Dum spiro spero*, said the heathen ; but, *Dum exspiro spero*, says the Christian. The one, Whilst I live, I hope ; the other also, When I die, I hope : so Job, 'I will hope in thee though thou killest me.' It tells the soul such sweet stories of the succeeding joys ; what comforts there be in heaven ; what peace, what joy, what triumphs, marriage-songs, and hallelujahs there are in that country whither she is travelling, that she goes merrily away with her present burden.

It holds the head whilst it aches, and gives invisible drink to the thirsty conscience. It is a liberty to them that are in prison, and the sweetest physic to the sick. St Paul calls it an anchor, Heb. vi. 19. Let the winds blow, and the storms beat, and the waves swell, yet the anchor stays the ship. It breaks through all difficulties, and makes way for the soul to follow it. It teacheth Abraham to expect fruit from a withered stock ; and Joseph in a dungeon, to look for the sun and stars' obeisance. It counsels a man, as Esdras did the woman who, having lost her son, would needs die languishing in the disconsolate fields : 'Go thy way into the city to thine husband,' 2 Esd. x. 17. Mourn not, wretch, for the loss of some worldly and perishing delight : sit not down and die, though the fruit of thy womb be swallowed into the earth ; but go home to the city, the city of mercy, to thine husband, even thy husband Jesus Christ ; let him comfort thee. This is the voice of Hope.

Though misery be present, comfort absent, though through the dim and waterish humour of thy heart, thou canst spy no deliverance, yet such is the nature of hope, that *futura facta dicit*,—it speaks of future things as if they were present : 'We are saved by hope,' Rom. viii. 24. Yet, *se liberati, ut adhuc speranda sit hereditas, postea possidenda. Nunc habemus jus ad rem, nondum in re*,—We have our inheritance in hope ; which gives us the right of the substance, though not the substance of the right ; assurance of the possession, though not possession of the thing assured. This tells us, that *nemo valde dolebit et diu*,—no man should grieve much and long ; God making our misery *aut tolerabilem, aut brevem*,—either sufferable or short.

These are the comforts of hope. Now, that you may not be deceived, there is (as I said before of faith) a thing like hope, which is not it.

There is a bold and presumptuous hope, an ignorant security and ungrounded persuasion, the very illusion of the devil, who, when he cannot prevail with downright evil, cozens with the shadows of goodness : that how wickedly and wretchedly soever a man shall live, though he furs himself warm with poor men's hearts, though he forbids his brains (as on covenant) one sober hour in the year to think of heaven, though he thirst for carouses of blood, though he strives to powder a whole kingdom with the corns of death and massacre, though he carries half-a-dozen inappropriate churches on his sacrilegious back, though he out-thunder heaven with blasphemies, though he trample under his profane foot the precious blood of God's Son ; yet still he hopes to be saved by the mercy of God. But we will sooner cast pearls to swine, and bread to dogs, than the comforts of Zion to such. We say not, 'Rejoice and tremble,' but tremble without rejoicing. We sing not to them, 'With the Lord is mercy, that he might be feared ;' but with the Lord is judgment and vengeance ; with him is plague and pestilence,

storm and tempest, horror and anguish, indignation and wrath, that he may be feared. Against this hope we shut up the bosom of consolation, and the promise of safety by the merits of Christ; and so far as we are charged, the very gates of everlasting life.

There is a hope, sober, faithful, well-grounded, well-guarded, well-assured. This is like a house built on a rock. The rock is God's promised mercy; the building, hope in Christ: it is, as it were, moated or entrenched about with his blood by the sweet testimony of God's Spirit to the conscience: known by the charity of the inhabitants; for it keeps bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, entertainment for strangers. To this hope we open the doors of the kingdom of heaven; and so far as the commission of the keys lead us, we unlock the gates of eternal life, and allow entrance. We call this 'the blessed hope.'

CHARITY is an excellent virtue, and therefore rare; if ever in this contentious age, wherein *fratrum quoque gratia rara est*, the unfeigned love of brothers is strange. Woe is me! before I am come to define what love is, I am fallen into a declamation against the want of it. What is here chiefly commended is chiefly contemned, as if we had no need of mutual succour, nor could spare a room in our hearts to entertain charity, lest we should expel our old loved guests, fraud, malice, and ambition. Love hath two proper objects—the one, immediate and principal; the other, mediate and limited.

The proper and immediate object of our love is God. This is the great commandment, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength.' As if he would not leave out the least sinew or string of the heart, the least faculty or power of the soul, the least organ or action of the strength. So Bernard: 'With all the heart,' that is, affectionately; 'with all thy soul,' that is, wisely; 'with all thy strength,' that is, constantly. Let the zeal of thy heart inflame thy love to God; let the wisdom of thy soul guide it; let the strength of thy might confirm it. All the affections of the heart, all the election of the soul, all the administration of the body. The soul judgeth, the will prosecutes, the strength executes. God can brook no rivals; no division betwixt him and Mammon, betwixt him and Melchom, betwixt him and Baal, betwixt him and Belial. *Causa diligendi Deum Deus est, modus sine modo*,—The cause and motive to love God, is God; the manner is without measure. *Minus amat te, qui aliquid amat præter te, quod non amat propter te*,—He poorly loves God, that loves anything besides him, which he doth not love for him.

The subordinate object of love is man, and his love is the effect of the former cause, and an actual demonstration of the other inward affection. Waters coming from the sea boil through the veins of the earth till they become springs, and those springs rivers, and those rivers run back to the sea again. All man's love must be carried in the stream of God's love. Blessed is he that loves *amicum in Domino, inimicum pro Domino*,—his friend in the Lord, his enemy for the Lord. 'Owe nothing to any man, but this, that ye love one another,' Rom. xiii. 8. Other debts, once truly paid, are no more due; but this debt, the more we pay it, the more we owe it; and we still do acknowledge ourselves debtors to all, when we are clear with all: proverbially, 'I owe him nothing but love.' The communication of this riches doth not impoverish the proprietary; the more he spends of his stock, the more he hath: 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth,' Prov. xi. 24. But he that will hoard the treasure of his charity shall grow poor, empty, and bankrupt: 'There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth unto

poverty.' Love is the abridgment of the law, the new precept of the gospel. Luther calls it the shortest and the longest divinity: short, for the form of words; long, yea, everlasting, for the use and practice; for 'charity shall never cease.'

II. Thus for the first degree of comparison, positively. The second is comparative; where, though it be said virtues and great men must not be compared, yet we may without offence bring them to a holy conference; else how shall we perceive the Apostle's intended scope, the transcendency of charity? I will therefore first confer faith with hope, and then with them both, charity.

1. The distinction between faith and hope is nice, and must warily be discovered. I will reduce the differences into three respects, of order, office, and object:—

For *order*: Paul gives faith the precedency. 'Faith is the ground of things hoped for,' Heb. xi. Faith always goes before; hope follows after, and may in some sort be said to be the daughter of faith. For it is as impossible for a man to hope for that which he believes not, as for a painter to draw a picture in the air. Indeed, more is believed than is hoped for; but nothing is hoped for which is not believed. So that on necessity, in respect of order, faith must precede hope.

For *office*: faith is the Christian's logic; hope his rhetoric. Faith perceives what is to be done, hope gives alacrity to the doing it. Faith guides, adviseth, rectifieth; hope courageously encounters with all adversaries.* Therefore faith is compared to a doctor in the schools, hope to a captain in the wars.† Faith discerns the truth, hope fights against impatience, heaviness of spirit, infirmity, dejectedness, desperation. Divines have alluded the difference between faith and hope in divinity to that between wisdom and valour in philosophy. Valour without wisdom is rashness, wisdom without valour is cowardice. Faith without hope is knowledge without valour to resist Satan; hope without faith is rash presumption, and an indiscreet darning; you see their different office.

For *object*: faith's object is the absolute word and infallible promise of God; hope's object is the thing promised. *Fides intuetur verbum rei, spes vero rem verbi*,—Faith looks to the word of the thing, hope to the thing of the word. So that faith hath for its object the *truth* of God; hope, the *goodness* of God. Faith is of things both good and bad, hope of good things only. A man believes there is a hell, as truly as he believes there is a heaven; but he fears the one, and hopes only for the other. Faith hath objected to it things past, present, future. Past, it believes Christ dead for our sins, and risen again for our justification. Present, that he now sits at the right hand of his Father in heaven. Future, that he shall come to judge quick and dead. Hope only respects and expects things to come. For a man cannot hope for that which he hath. You see how in some sense hope excels faith. For there is a faith in the devils; they believe the truth of God, the certainty of the Scriptures; they acknowledge Christ the Judge of quick and dead; therefore cry, 'Why tormentest thou us before the time?' They have faith joined with a Popish preparatory good work, fear; 'the devils believe and tremble:' yea, they pray, they beseech Christ not to send them into the deeps; what then want they? Hope, a confident expectation of the mercy of God; this they can never have. They believe; they cannot hope. This is the life of Christians, and the want makes devils. If it were not for this hope, 'we of all men were most miserable,' 1 Cor. xv. 19.

* *Alsted System. Theolog.*, lib. iii., loc. 17.

† Aug.

2. Charity differs from them both. These three divine graces are a created trinity; and have some glimmering resemblance of the Trinity uncreated. For as there the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from them both; so here, a true faith begets a constant hope, and from them proceeds charity. 'Thus is God's temple built in our hearts,' saith Augustine: the foundation whereof is faith; hope the erection of the walls; charity the perfection of the roof.

In the godly all these three are united together, and cannot be sundered. We believe in God's mercy, we hope for his mercy, and we love him for his mercy. Faith says, there are good things prepared: hope says, they are prepared for me: charity says, I endeavour to walk worthy of them. So that, what good faith believes shall be, hope expects for herself, and charity aims at the way to get it, by 'keeping the commandments.' Faith apprehends both reward and punishment; hope only looks for good things for ourselves; charity desires the glory of God, and the good of all our brethren.

III. The second degree gives way to the third, last, best: the superlative. 'But the greatest of these is charity.' Time will not afford me to answer all the objections which subtle wits have ignorantly deduced from these words. Neither were it to other purpose than to write Iliads after Homer, they have been so soundly and satisfyingly answered. I will only mention two, and but report a responsive solution.

Object. 1.—The principal promises are made to believers: 'Whosoever believes, and is baptized, shall be saved.' So no less a promise is made to lovers: 'All things shall work together for the best to those that love God,' &c., Rom. viii. 28. 'God,' saith the Psalmist, 'is near to those that call upon him.' He is close by all those that suffer for him; but he is within those that love him. Here is *prope, intra, intrus*. This same *intra*, within, is of the highest degree. 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him,' 1 John iv. 17. O unspeakable felicity!

Object. 2.—If charity be greater than faith, then is not man justified by faith only. Inconsequent illation! St Paul commends not love for the virtue of justification: it may fail in that particular action, yet receive no impeachment to the excellency of it. By demonstration: A prince doth excel a peasant: shall any man therefore infer that he can plough better, or have more skill in tillage? A philosopher doth excel a mechanic, though he cannot grind so well as a miller, or limn so cunningly as a painter. A man is better than a beast: who but a madman will therefore conclude that he can run faster than a horse, draw more than an ox, or carry a greater burden than an elephant? Though he fail in these particular acts, yet none will deny but he is better than a beast.

The truth is, that in faith stands originally our fellowship with God. Into that hand he poureth the riches of his mercy for salvation; and were the actions of charity never so great and (foolishly thought) meritorious, yet, if not the effects of a true saving faith, they are lost, and a man may for his charity go to the devil. And though they would plead from the form of the last judgment (Matt. xxv.) that God accepts men to life for their deeds of charity, feeding, clothing, relieving; yet the Scripture fully testifies, that God neither accepts these, nor ourselves for these, further than they are the effects of a true faith. Our persons being first justified by faith in Christ, then God will crown our works. Yet a Christian must work: for no nathfidian, as well as no nullfidian, shall be admitted into heaven. 'Therefore,' saith the apostle, 'faith worketh by love,' Gal. v. 6. For faith is able to justify of itself, not to work of itself. The hand alone can receive an alms,

but cannot cut a piece of wood without an axe or some instrument. Faith is the Christian's hand, and can without help receive God's given grace into the heart; but to produce the fruits of obedience, and to work the actual duties required, it must have an instrument: add love to it, and it worketh by love. So that the one is our justification before God, and the other our testification before men.

Their number is considerable; these three, neither more nor less. Why not two? as there be two parts in man, his understanding and will: to direct these two, is sufficient to salvation. By faith the understanding is kept safe; by charity, the will: what needed then the mention of hope? Yes, hope is the daughter of faith, and the mother of charity; and as man hath an understanding to be informed, and a will to be rectified, so he hath a heart to be comforted, which is the proper office of hope.

But why, then, speaks he of no more than three? St Peter mentions eight together, 2 Pet. i. 6; and St Paul himself, in another place, puts in nine, Gal. v. 22. Why are all these left out in this glorious catalogue? Is it enough to have these three and no more? Are the rest superfluous, and may well be spared? Nothing so; but all those virtues are comprehended under these three: as to the trade of a stationer, some are required to print, some to correct, some to fold, others to bind, and others to garnish; yet all belongs to one trade. There be many rays, and but one sun; there is heat and light in one fire. So all those graces may be reduced to these three principals, as we read 1 Thess. i. 3, the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope; temperance, patience, godliness, &c., are all servants to these three great princes, faith, hope, and charity.

IV. Lastly, for the prelation. Wherein consisteth this high transcendency of charity? In six privileges:—

1. For latitude, love is the greatest. Faith and hope are restrained within the limits of our particular persons. 'The just man lives by his own faith,' and hopes good to himself; but love is like the vine which 'God brought out of Egypt, and cast out the heathen to plant it, which covereth the mountains with the shadow of its boughs, and spreads its branches unto the sea and the rivers,' Ps. lxxx. 8. It is like the sun in the sky, that throws his comfortable beams upon all, and forbears not to warm even that earth that beareth weeds. Love extends to earth and heaven. In heaven it affecteth God, the Maker and mover; the angels, as our guardians; the triumphant saints, for their pious sanctity. On earth, it embraceth those that fear the Lord especially; it wisheth conversion to those that do not; it counsels the rich; it comforts the poor; it reverenceth superiors, respecteth inferiors; doth good to friends, no evil to foes; wisheth well to all. This is the latitude of charity. Faith hath but narrow limits, but the extent of love is universal, not bounded with the world. Faith believes for thyself, but charity derives and drives the effects of thy faith to others. Thy faith relieves thyself, thy charity thy brother.

2. For perpetuity and continuance. Faith lays hold on God's gracious promise for everlasting salvation; hope expects this with patience; but when God shall fulfil his word, and us with joy, then faith shall be at an end, hope at an end, but love shall remain between God and us an everlasting bond. Therefore, saith the Apostle, 'now abideth faith,' &c. *Now*: now three, then one, and that is charity. When we have possession of those pleasures which we hoped and believed, what longer use is there of faith or hope? But our loves shall not end with our lives. We shall everlastingly love our Maker, Saviour, Sanctifier, angels, and saints; where no discontent shall

breed any jar in our hallelujahs. If the use of love be so comfortable on earth, what may we think it will be in heaven?

Thus saith Chrysostom: 'Only love is eternal.' Now, faith and hope hold up the hands of charity, as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses; but then their use and office shall cease. *Tunc non erit spes, quando erit spes*,—Hope shall not be when the thing hoped is. Hope shall bring in possession, possession shall thrust out hope. Therefore, saith Augustine, is charity greater, *etsi non propter eminentiam, tamen propter permanentiam*,—if not for the excellency, yet for the perpetuity.

Thus to justify a man, faith is greater; but in a man justified, charity is greater. Let faith alone with the great work of our salvation; but that finished, it shall end, and so yield superiority to love, which shall endure for ever.

3. For the honour and likeness it hath unto God. Faith and hope make not a man like God, but charity doth. He neither can be said to believe nor to hope; but we know he loves, yea, he is love.

4. In respect of its titles, charity excelleth. It is *novum mandatum*, the new commandment: faith was never called so. It is *vinculum perfectionis*, the bond of perfection: faith is not so termed; thy faith only ties thyself to God, but love binds up all in one bundle of peace. It is *impletio legis*, the fulfilling of the law: where hath faith such a title? St Ambrose, on the funeral of Theodosius, observes, that he died with these words in his mouth, *Dilexi, dilexi*, which he conceived to be his answer to the angels asking him how he had behaved himself in his empire,—I have loved, I have loved; that was enough.

5. Charity is more noble, for it is a better thing to give than to receive. Faith and hope are all of the taking hand, but charity gives. If faith gives glory to God, yet this is but his own, an acknowledgment of that to be his which is his. The property of faith is to receive into itself; the property of love to lay out itself to others.

6. For manifestation. Faith and hope are things unseen, and may be dissembled, but charity cannot be without visible fruits; therefore the only trial of faith and hope is by charity.

Thus charity is greatest, if not *respectu originis*, or for causality, yet for dignity. 1. More honourable, because like God. 2. More noble, because more beneficial to man. 3. More communicable, for faith respects thyself, charity all. 4. More durable; when faith is swallowed up in vision, hope in possession, then love remains. 5. For titles. 6. For manifestation.

Thus you have commended to your souls these three sisters, faith, hope, and charity. Faith we must have, or we are reprobates; hope, or wretches; charity, or not Christians. There is a promise made to faith, that it shall have access to God, Heb. xi. 6; to hope, that it shall not be ashamed, Rom. v. 5; but to charity, that it shall dwell in God, and have God dwelling in it, 1 John. iv. 16.

I should now tell you, that as these three fair sisters came down from heaven, so in a cross contrariety the devil sends up three foul fiends from hell: against faith, infidelity; against hope, desperation; against charity, malice. He that entertains the elder sister, unbelief, I quake to speak his doom, yet I must: 'He is already condemned,' John iii. 18. He that embraceth the second ugly hag, despair, bars up against himself the possibility of all comfort, because he offends so precious a nature, the mercy of God, and tramples under his desperate feet that blood which is held out to his unaccepting hand. He that welcomes malice, welcomes the devil himself;

he is called 'the envious,' and loves extremely to lodge himself in an envious heart. These be fearful, prodigious sisters: fly them and their embraces; and remember, O ye whom Christ concerns, the commandment of your Saviour, 'Love one another!'

I will end with our Apostle's exhortation to his Philippians: 'If there be any consolation in Christ,' and there is consolation in him when the whole world cannot afford it; 'if any comfort of love,' and he that knows not the comforts of love knows no difference betwixt man and beast; 'if any fellowship of the Spirit,' by whom we are all knit into one communion, and enriched with the same treasures of grace; 'if any bowels and mercies,' if uncharitableness and avarice hath* turned our entrails into stone and iron, if we have not forgotten the use and need of mercy; 'fulfil my joy, that ye be like-minded, and have the same love,' Phil. ii. 1, 2. Fulfil the Apostle's joy only? No, the joy of the bride and Bridegroom, of the church on earth, of the saints in heaven; the joy of the blessed angels; the joy of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and last of all, the joy of your own hearts, that you 'Love one another.' Forget not that trite but true saying—

'They shall not want prosperity,
That keep faith, hope, and charity.'

* Hath not.—Ed.