

LECTURE I.

CHARITY, OR LOVE THE SUM OF ALL VIRTUE.

‘Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.’—1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1-3.

IN these words we observe—*First*, that something is spoken of as of special importance, and as peculiarly essential in Christians, which the Apostle calls CHARITY. And this charity, we find, is abundantly insisted on in the New Testament by Christ, and his apostles,—more insisted on, indeed, than any other virtue.

But, then, the word “charity,” as used in the New Testament, is of much more extensive signification, than as it is used generally in common discourse. What persons very

often mean by "charity," in their ordinary conversation, is a disposition to hope and think the best of others, and to put a good construction on their words and behavior; and sometimes the word is used for a disposition to give to the poor. But these things are only certain particular branches, or fruits of that great virtue of charity which is so much insisted on throughout the New Testament. The word properly signifies *love*, or *that disposition or affection whereby one is dear to another*; and the original ("agape"), which is here translated "*charity*," might better have been rendered "*love*," for that is the proper English of it: so that by charity in the New Testament, is meant the very same thing as Christian love; and though it be more frequently used for love to men, yet sometimes it is used to signify not only love to men, but love to God. So it is manifestly used by the Apostle in this epistle, as he explains himself in chapter viii. 1—"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth," &c. Here the comparison is between knowledge and charity—and the preference is given to charity, because knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And then, in the next two

verses, it is more particularly explained how knowledge usually puffs up, and why charity edifieth; so that what is called *charity* in the first verse, is called *loving God* in the third, for the very same thing is evidently spoken of in the two places. And doubtless the apostle means the same thing by charity in this thirteenth chapter, that he does in the eighth; for he is here comparing the same two things together that he was there, viz.: knowledge and charity. “Though I have all knowledge and have not charity, I am nothing;” and again, “charity never faileth, but—knowledge, it shall vanish away.” So that by charity here, we are doubtless to understand *Christian love* in its full extent, and whether it be exercised toward God, or our fellow-creatures.

And this charity is here spoken of, as that which is, in a distinguishing manner, the great and essential thing: which will appear more fully when we observe, *Secondly*, what things are mentioned as being in vain without it, viz.: the most excellent things that ever belong to natural men; the most excellent privileges, and the most excellent performances. *First*, the most excellent privi-

leges, such as preaching with tongues, the gift of prophecy, understanding all mysteries, faith to remove mountains, &c.; and *Secondly*, the most excellent performances, such as giving all one's goods to feed the poor, and the body to be burned, &c. Greater things than these, no natural man ever had or did, and they are the kind of things in which men are exceedingly prone to trust; and yet the apostle declares that if we have them all, and have not charity, we are nothing. The doctrine taught, then, is this:

THAT ALL THE VIRTUE THAT IS SAVING, AND THAT DISTINGUISHES TRUE CHRISTIANS FROM OTHERS, IS SUMMED UP IN CHRISTIAN LOVE. This appears from the words of the text, because so many other things are mentioned that natural men may have, and the things mentioned are of the highest kind it is possible they should have, both of privilege and performance, and yet it is said they all avail nothing without this, whereas if any of them were saving, they would avail something without it.

And by the apostle's mentioning so many and so high things, and then saying of them all that they profited nothing without charity, we may justly conclude, that there is nothing

all that avails anything without it. Let a man have what he will, and do what he will, it signifies nothing without charity, which surely implies that charity is the great thing, and that everything which has not charity in some way contained or implied in it is nothing, and that this charity is the life and soul of all religion, without which all things that wear the name of virtues are empty and vain.

In speaking to this doctrine, I would first notice the nature of this divine love, and then show the truth of the doctrine respecting it. And

I. *I would speak of the nature of a truly Christian love.* And here I would observe

1. *That all true Christian love is one and the same in its principle.* It may be various in its forms and objects, and may be exercised either toward God or men, but it is the same principle in the heart that is the foundation of every exercise of a truly Christian love, whatever may be its object. It is not with the holy love in the heart of the Christian, as it is with the love of other men. Their love toward different objects, may be from different principles and motives, and with different views ; but a truly Christian love is different

from this. It is one as to its principle; whatever the object about which it is exercised; it is from the same spring or fountain in the heart, though it may flow out in different channels and diverse directions, and therefore it is all fitly comprehended in the one name of *charity*, as in the text. That this Christian love is one, whatever the objects toward which it may flow forth, appears by the following things:—

First, It is all *from the same Spirit* influencing the heart. It is from the breathing of the same Spirit that true Christian love arises, both toward God and man. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of love, and when the former enters the soul, love also enters with it. God is love, and he that has God dwelling in him by his Spirit, will have love dwelling in him also. The nature of the Holy Spirit is love; and it is by communicating himself, in his own nature, to the saints, that their hearts are filled with divine charity. Hence we find that the saints are partakers of the divine nature, and Christian love is called the “love of the Spirit,” Romans xv. 30, and “love in the Spirit,” Col. i. 8, and the very bowels of love and mercy seem to signify the same

thing with the fellowship of the Spirit, Phil. ii.

1. It is that Spirit, too, that infuses love to God, Rom. v. 5; and it is by the indwelling of that Spirit, that the soul abides in love to God and man, 1 John, xiv. 12, 13; and iii. 23, 24. And,

Second, Christian love both to God and man, is wrought in the heart by *the same work of the Spirit*. There are not two works of the Spirit of God, one to infuse a spirit of love to God, and the other to infuse a spirit of love to men, but in producing one, the Spirit produces the other also. In the work of conversion, the Holy Spirit renews the heart by giving it a divine temper; Eph. iv. 23, and it is one and the same divine temper thus wrought in the heart, that flows out in love both to God and man. And,

Third, When God and man are loved with a truly Christian love, they are both loved *from the same motives*. When God is loved aright, he is loved for his excellency, and the beauty of his nature, especially the holiness of his nature; and it is from the same motive that the saints are loved, for holiness' sake. And all things that are loved with a truly holy love, are loved from the same respect to God. Love to God is the foundation of gra-

cious love to men ; and men are loved, either because they are in some respect like God in the possession of his nature and spiritual image, or because of the relation they stand in to him as his children or creatures—as those who are blessed of him, or to whom his mercy is offered, or in some other way from regard to him. Only remarking that though Christian love be one in its principle, yet it is distinguished and variously denominated in two ways, with respect to its objects, and the kinds of its exercise, as for example, its degrees, &c. I now proceed,

II. *To show the truth of the doctrine, that all virtue that is saving or distinguishing of true Christians, is summed up in Christian love.* And,

1. *We may argue this from what reason teaches of the nature of love.* And if we duly consider its nature, two things will appear.

First, That love will dispose to all proper acts of respect to both God and man. This is evident because a true respect to either God or man *consists* in love. If a man sincerely loves God, it will dispose him to render all proper respect to him ; and men need no other incitement to show each other all the

respect that is due, than love. Love to God will dispose a man to honor him, to worship and adore him, and heartily to acknowledge his greatness, and glory, and dominion. And so it will dispose to all acts of obedience to God; for the servant that loves his master, and the subject that loves his sovereign, will be disposed to proper subjection and obedience. Love will dispose the Christian to behave toward God, as a child to a father; amid difficulties to resort to him for help, and put all his trust in him; just as it is natural for us, in case of need or affliction, to go to one that we love for pity and help. It will lead us, too, to give credit to his word, and to put confidence in him; for we are not apt to suspect the veracity of those we have entire friendship for. It will dispose us to praise God for the mercies we receive from him, just as we are disposed to gratitude for any kindness we receive from our fellow-men that we love. Love, again, will dispose our hearts to submission to the will of God, for we are more willing that the will of those we love should be done, than of others. We naturally desire that those we love should be suited, and that we should be agreeable to them.

and true affection and love to God will dispose the heart to acknowledge God's right to govern, and that he is worthy to do it, and so will dispose to submission. Love to God will dispose us to walk humbly with him, for he that loves God will be disposed to acknowledge the vast distance between God and himself. It will be agreeable to such an one, to exalt God, and set him on high above all, and to lie low before him. A true Christian delights to have God exalted on his own abasement, because he loves him. He is willing to own that God is worthy of this, and it is with delight that he casts himself in the dust before the Most High, from his sincere love to him.

And so a due consideration of the nature of love will show that it disposes men to all duties toward their neighbors. If men have a sincere love to their neighbors, it will dispose them to all acts of justice toward those neighbors—for real love and friendship always dispose us to give those we love their due, and never to wrong them. Rom. xiii. 10. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." And the same love will dispose to truth toward neighbors, and will tend to prevent all lying,

and fraud, and deceit. Men are not disposed to exercise fraud and treachery toward those they love; for thus to treat men is to treat them like enemies, but love destroys enmity. Thus the apostle makes use of the oneness that there ought to be among Christians, as an argument to induce them to truth between man and man. Ephesians iv. 25. Love will dispose to walk humbly amongst men, for a real and true love will incline us to high thoughts of others, and to think them better than ourselves. It will dispose men to honor one another, for all are naturally inclined to think highly of those they love, and to give them honor; so that by love are fulfilled those precepts, 1 Peter xi. 17, "Honor all men," and Phil. ii. 3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves." Love will dispose to contentment in the sphere in which God hath placed us, without coveting any things that our neighbor possesses, or envying him on account of any good thing that he has. It will dispose men to meekness and gentleness in their carriage toward their neighbors, and not to treat them with passion, or violence, or

heat of spirit, but with moderation, and calmness, and kindness. It will check and restrain everything like a bitter spirit; for love has no bitterness in it, but is a gentle and sweet disposition and affection of the soul. It will prevent broils and quarrels, and will dispose men to peaceableness, and to forgive injurious treatment received from others; as it is said in Proverbs x. 12, "Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins."

Love will dispose men to all acts of mercy toward their neighbors when they are under any affliction or calamity, for we are naturally disposed to pity those that we love when they are afflicted. It will dispose men to give to the poor, to bear one another's burdens, and to weep with those that weep, as well as to rejoice with those that do rejoice. It will dispose men to the duties they owe to one another in their several places and relations. It will dispose a people to all the duties they owe to their rulers, and to give them all that honor and subjection which are their due. And it will dispose rulers to rule the people over whom they are set, justly, seriously and faithfully, seeking their good, and not any

by-ends of their own. It will dispose a people to all proper duty to their ministers, to hearken to their counsels and instructions, and to submit to them in the house of God, and to support and sympathize with and pray for them as those that watch for their souls; and it will dispose ministers faithfully and ceaselessly to seek the good of the souls of their people, watching for them as those that must give account. Love will dispose to suitable carriage between superiors and inferiors: it will dispose children to honor their parents, and servants to be obedient to their masters, not with eye service, but in singleness of heart; and it will dispose masters to exercise gentleness and goodness toward their servants.

Thus love would dispose to all duties both toward God, and toward man. And if it will thus dispose to all duties, then it follows, that it is the root, and spring, and, as it were, a comprehension of all virtues. It is a principle, which if it be implanted in the heart, is alone sufficient to produce all good practice; and every right disposition toward God and man is summed up in it, and comes from

it, as the fruit from the tree, or the stream from the fountain.

Second, Reason teaches that *whatever performances or seeming virtues there are without love, are unsound and hypocritical*. If there be no love in what men do, then there is no true respect to God or men in their conduct; and if so, then certainly there is no sincerity. Religion is nothing without proper respect to God. The very notion of religion among mankind, is, that it is the creature's exercise and expression of such respect toward the creator. But if there be no true respect or love, then all that is called religion is but a seeming show, and there is no real religion in it, but it is unreal and vain. Thus if a man's faith be of such a sort that there is no true respect to God in it, reason teaches that it must be in vain; for if there be no love to God in it, there can be no true respect to him. From this it appears that love is always contained in a true and living faith, and that it is its true and proper life and soul, without which, faith is as dead as the body is without its soul; and that it is that which especially distinguishes a living faith from every other: but of this more particularly

hereafter. Without love to God, again, there can be no true honor to him. A man is never hearty in the honor he seems to render to another whom he does not love; so that all the seeming honor or worship that is ever paid without love, is but hypocritical. And so reason teaches that there is no sincerity in the obedience that is performed without love, for if there be no love, nothing that is done can be spontaneous and free, but all must be forced. So without love, there can be no hearty submission to the will of God, and there can be no real and cordial trust and confidence in him. He that does not love God will not trust him: he never will, with true acquiescence of soul, cast himself into the hands of God, or into the arms of his mercy.

And so whatever good carriage there may be in men toward their neighbors, yet reason teaches that it is all unacceptable and in vain if at the same time there be no real respect in the heart toward those neighbors; if the outward conduct is not prompted by inward love. And from these two things taken together, viz., that love is of such a nature that it will produce all virtues, and dispose to all

duties to God and men, and that without it there can be no sincere virtue, and no duty at all properly performed, the truth of the doctrine follows, that all true and distinguishing Christian virtue and grace may be summed up in love. In the

2. *The Scriptures teach us that love is the sum of all that is contained in the law of God, and of all the duties required in his word.* This the Scriptures teach of the law in general, and of each table of the law in particular.

First, The Scriptures teach this of the law and word of God in general. By the law, in the Scriptures, is sometimes meant the whole of the written word of God, as in John x. 34. "Is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods?" And sometimes by the law is meant the five books of Moses, as in Acts xxiv. 14, where it is named with the distinction of the "law" and the "prophets." And sometimes by the law, is meant the ten commandments, as containing the sum of all the duty of mankind, and all that is required as of universal and perpetual obligation. But whether we take the law as signifying only the ten commandments, or as including the whole written

word of God, the Scriptures teach us that the sum of all that is required in it is love. Thus when by the law is meant the ten commandments, it is said in Romans xiii. 8, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law;" and therefore several of the commandments are rehearsed, and it is added, in the tenth verse, that "love" (which leads us to obey them all,) "is the fulfilling of the law." Now unless love was the sum of what the law requires, the law could not be wholly fulfilled in love; for a law is fulfilled only by obedience to the sum or whole of what it contains and enjoins. So the same apostle again declares, 1. Timothy, i. 5, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, &c." Or if we take the law in a yet more extensive sense, as the whole written word of God, the Scriptures still teach us, that love is the sum of all that is required in it. In Matthew xxii. 40, Christ teaches, that on the two precepts of loving God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, hang all the law and the prophets; i. e. all the written word of God; for what was then called the law and

the prophets, was the whole written word of God that was then extant. And,

Second, The Scriptures teach the same thing of each table of the law in particular. The command "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," is declared by Christ, Matthew xxii. 38, to be the sum of the first table of the law, or the first great commandment; and in the next verse, to love our neighbor as ourself, is declared to be the sum of the second table; as it is, also, in Romans xiii. 9, where the precepts of the second table of the law are particularly specified: and it is then added, "And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And so in Galatians v. 14, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And the same seems to be stated in James ii. 8, "If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well." Hence love appears to be the sum of all the virtue and duty that God requires of us, and therefore must undoubtedly be the most essential thing—the sum of all the virtue that is

essential and distinguishing in real Christianity. That which is the sum of all duty, must be the sum of all real virtue.

3. *The truth of the doctrine as shown by the Scriptures, appears from this, that the apostle teaches us, Galatians v. 6, that "faith works by love."* A truly Christian faith is that which produces good works ; but all the good works which it produces, are by love. By this, two things are evident to the present purpose.

First, That true love is an ingredient in true and living faith, and is what is most essential and distinguishing in it. Love is no ingredient in a merely speculative faith, but it is the life and soul of a practical faith. A truly practical or saving faith, is light and heat together, or rather light and love, while that which is only a speculative faith, is only light without heat ; and in that it wants spiritual heat or divine love, is in vain and good for nothing. A speculative faith consists only in the assent of the understanding ; but in a saving faith there is also the consent of the heart ; and that faith which is only of the former kind, is no better than the faith of devils, for they have faith so far as it can

exist without love, believing while they tremble. Now the true spiritual consent of the heart, cannot be distinguished from the love of the heart. He whose heart consents to Christ as a Saviour, has true love to him as such. For the heart sincerely to consent to the way of salvation by Christ, cannot be distinguished from loving that way of salvation, and resting in it. There is an act of choice or election in true saving faith, whereby the soul chooses Christ for its Saviour and portion, and accepts of and embraces him as such; but, as was observed before, an election or choice whereby it so chooses God and Christ, is an act of love—the love of a soul embracing him as its dearest friend and portion. Faith is a duty that God requires of every one. We are commanded to believe, and unbelief is a sin forbidden by God. Faith is a duty required in the first table of the law, and in the first command of that table; and therefore it will follow, that it is comprehended in the great commandment, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c.”—and so it will follow that love is the most essential thing in a true faith. That love is the very life and spirit of a true faith,

is especially evident from a comparison of this declaration of the apostle, that "faith works by love," and the last verse of the second chapter of the epistle of James, which declares, that "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." The working, active and acting nature of anything, is the life of it; and that which makes us call a thing alive, is, that we observe an active nature in it. This active, working nature in man, is the spirit which he has within him. And as his body without this spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. And if we would know what the working active thing in true faith is, the apostle tells us in Galatians v. 6, "Faith works by love." So that it is love which is the active working spirit in all true faith. This is its very soul, without which it is dead, as, in another form, he tells in the text, saying that faith without charity or love, is nothing, though it be to such a degree that it can remove mountains. And when he says, in the seventh verse of the context, that charity "believeth all things and hopeth all things," he probably refers to the great virtues of believing and hoping in the truth and grace

of God, to which he compares charity in other parts of the chapter, and particularly in the last verse, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, &c." For in the seventh verse he gives the preference to charity or love before the other virtues of faith and hope, because it includes them; for he says, "charity believeth all things and hopeth all things;" so that this seems to be his meaning, and not merely as it is vulgarly understood, that charity believeth and hopeth the best with regard to our neighbors. That a justifying faith, as a most distinguishing mark of Christianity, is comprehended in the great command of loving God, appears also, very plainly, from what Christ says to the Jews, John v. 40-43, &c.

Second, It is further manifest from this declaration of the apostle "that faith works by love," *that all Christian exercises of the heart, and works of the life are from love;* for we are abundantly taught in the New Testament, that all Christian holiness begins with faith in Jesus Christ. All christian obedience is in the Scriptures called the obedience of faith; as in Romans xvi. 26, the gospel is said to be "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." The obedience here

spoken of, is doubtless the same with that spoken of in the eighteenth verse of the preceding chapter, where Paul speaks of making "the Gentiles obedient by word and deed." And in Galatians ii. 20 he tells us, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," &c.; and we are often told that Christians, so far as they are Christians, "live by faith;" which is equivalent to saying that all gracious and holy exercises and virtues of the spiritual life are by faith. But how does faith work these things? Why, in this place in Galatians, it is expressly said, that it works whatsoever it does work *by love*. From which the truth of the doctrine follows, viz.: that all that is saving and distinguishing in Christianity does radically consist, and is summarily comprehended in love.

In the application of this subject, we may use it in the way of self-examination, instruction, and exhortation. And

1. *In view of it let us examine ourselves, and see if we have the spirit which it enjoins.* From love to God, springs love to man, as says the apostle, 1 John v. 1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that be-

gat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Have we this love to all who are the children of God? This love, also, leads those who possess it, to rejoice in God, and to worship and magnify him. Heaven is made up of such. Revelations xv. 2, 3, 4, "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." Do we thus delight in God, and rejoice in his worship, and in magnifying his holy name? This love, also, leads those who possess it, sincerely to desire, and earnestly to endeavor to do good to their fellow-men. 1 John iii. 16-19, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our

lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." Is this spirit, which dwelt in Jesus Christ, the spirit that reigns in our hearts, and is seen in our daily life? The subject may, also, be of use,

2. *In the way of instruction.* And

First. This doctrine shows us *what is the right Christian spirit.* When the disciples, on their way to Jerusalem, desired Christ to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans who would not receive him, he told them, Luke ix. 55, by way of rebuke, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;" by which we are to understand, not that they did not know their own hearts, but that they did not know and truly feel what kind of spirit was proper and becoming to their character and spirit as his professed disciples, and becoming that evangelical dispensation that he had come to establish, and under

which they were now living. It might indeed be, and doubtless was true, that in many respects they did not know their own hearts. But what Christ here referred to was, not the want of self-knowledge in general, but the particular spirit they had manifested in desiring him to call down fire &c., a desire which showed not so much that they did not know what their own hearts or dispositions were, as that they did not seem to know what kind of spirit and temper was proper to the Christian dispensation that was henceforth to be established, and to the Christian character of which they were to be examples. They showed their ignorance of the true nature of Christ's kingdom; that it was to be a kingdom of love and peace; and that they did not know but that a revengeful spirit was a proper spirit for them as his disciples: and for this it is that he rebukes them.

And doubtless there are many, now-a-days, greatly to be rebuked for this, that though they have been so long in the school of Christ, and under the teachings of the gospel, yet they still remain under a great misapprehension as to what kind of a spirit a truly Christian spirit is, and what spirit is proper for the

followers of Christ and the dispensation under which they live. But if we attend to the text and its doctrine, they will teach us what this spirit is, viz.: that in its very essence and savor it is the spirit of divine and Christian love. This may, by way of eminence, be called *the* Christian spirit; for it is much more insisted on in the New Testament, than anything that concerns either our duty or our moral state. The words of Christ whereby he taught men their duty, and gave his counsels and commands to his disciples and others, were spent very much on the precepts of love; and as the words that proceeded out of his mouth were so full of this sweet divine virtue, he thus most manifestly commends it to us. And after his ascension, the apostles were full of the same spirit, in their epistles abundantly recommending love, peace, gentleness, goodness, bowels of compassion and kindness, directing us by such things to express our love to God and to Christ, as well as to our fellow-men, and especially to all that are his followers. This spirit, even a spirit of love, is the spirit that God holds forth greater motives in the gospel to induce us to, than to any other thing whatever. The work

of redemption which the gospel makes known, above all things affords motives to love; for that work was the most glorious and wonderful exhibition of love that ever was seen or heard of. Love is the principal thing that the gospel dwells on when speaking of God, and of Christ. It brings to light the love eternally existing between the Father and the Son, and declares how that same love has been manifested in many things; how that Christ is God's well-beloved Son, in whom he is ever well pleased; how he so loved him, that he has raised him to the throne of the mediatorial kingdom, and appointed him to be the judge of the world, and ordained that all mankind should stand before him in judgment. In the gospel, too, is revealed the love that Christ has to the Father, and the wonderful fruits of that love, particularly in his doing such great things, and suffering such great things in obedience to the Father's will, and for the honor of his justice, and law, and authority, as the great moral governor. There it is revealed how the Father and Son are one in love, that we might be induced, in the like spirit, to be one with them, and with one another, agreeably to Christ's prayer in John

xvii. 21-23, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." The gospel also declares to us that the love of God was from everlasting, and reminds us that he loved those that are redeemed by Christ, before the foundation of the world; and that he gave them to the Son; and that the Son loved them as his own. It reveals, too, the wonderful love of both the Father and the Son to the saints now in glory—that Christ not only loved them while in the world, but that he loved them to the end. And all this love is spoken of as bestowed on us while we were wanderers, outcasts, worthless, guilty, and even enemies. This is love, such as was never elsewhere known, or conceived. John xv. 13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Romans v. 7-10, "Scarcely for a righteous

man will one die * * *. But God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; * * * when we were enemies.”

God and Christ appear in the gospel revelation, as being clothed with love; as sitting as it were on a throne of mercy and grace, a seat of love, encompassed about with the sweet beams of love. Love is the light and glory that is round about the throne on which God is seated. This seems to be intended in the vision the apostle John, that loving and loved disciple, had of God in the isle of Patmos. Rev. iv. 3, “And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald;” that is, round about the throne on which God was sitting. So that God appeared to him, as he sat on his throne, as encompassed with a circle of exceeding sweet and pleasant light, like the beautiful colors of the rainbow, and like an emerald, which is a precious stone of exceeding pleasant and beautiful color—thus representing that the light and glory with which God appears surrounded in the gospel, is especially the glory of his love and covenant grace, for the rainbow was given to Noah as a token of both these.

Therefore it is plain, that this spirit, even a spirit of love, is the spirit that the gospel revelation does especially hold forth motives and inducements to; and this is especially and eminently the Christian spirit—the right spirit of the gospel.

Second. If it is indeed so, that all that is saving and distinguishing in a true Christian, is summarily comprehended in love, *then professors of Christianity may in this be taught as to their experiences, whether they are real Christian experiences or not.* If they are so, then love is the sum and substance of them. If persons have the true light of heaven let into their souls, it is not a light without heat. Divine knowledge and Divine love, go together. A spiritual view of divine things, always excites love in the soul, and draws forth the heart in love to every proper object. True discoveries of the divine character, dispose us to love God as the supreme good; they unite the heart in love to Christ; they incline the soul to flow out in love to God's people, and to all mankind. When persons have a true discovery of the excellency and sufficiency of Christ, this is the effect. When they experience a right belief

of the truth of the gospel, such a belief is accompanied by love. They love him whom they believe to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. When the truth of the glorious doctrines and promises of the gospel is seen, these doctrines and promises are like so many cords which take hold of the heart, and draw it out in love to God and Christ. When persons experience a true trust and reliance on Christ, they rely on him with love, and so do it with delight and sweet acquiescence of soul. The spouse sat under Christ's shadow with great delight, and rested sweetly under his protection because she loved him, Cant. ii. 2. When persons experience true comfort and spiritual joy, their joy is the joy of faith and love. They do not rejoice in themselves, but it is God who is their exceeding joy.

Third. This doctrine shows *the amiableness of a Christian spirit*. A spirit of love is an amiable spirit. It is the spirit of Jesus Christ; it is the spirit of heaven.

Fourth. This doctrine shows *the pleasantness of a Christian life*. A life of love, is a pleasant life. Reason and the Scriptures alike teach us, that "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom," and that "Her ways are

ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.—Prov. iii. 13 and 17.

Fifth. Hence we may learn the reason *why contention tends so much to the ruin of religion*. The Scriptures tell us that it has this tendency: “where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”—James iii. 16. And so we find it by experience. When contention comes into a place, it seems to prevent all good. And if religion has been flourishing before, it presently seems to chill and deaden it; and everything that is bad begins to flourish. And in the light of our doctrine, we may plainly see the reason of all this. For contention is directly against that which is the very sum of all that is essential and distinguishing in true Christianity, even a spirit of love and peace. No wonder, therefore, that Christianity cannot flourish in a time of strife and contention among its professors. No wonder that religion and contention cannot live together.

Sixth. Hence, then, *what a watch and guard should Christians keep against envy, and malice, and every kind of bitterness of spirit towards their neighbors*. For these things are the very reverse of the real essence

of Christianity. And it behooves Christians, as they would not, by their practice, directly contradict their profession, to take heed to themselves in this matter. They should suppress the first beginnings of ill-will, and bitterness, and envy; watch strictly against all occasions of such a spirit; strive and fight to the utmost against such a temper as tends that way; and avoid, as much as possible, all temptations that may lead to it. A Christian should at all times keep a strong guard against everything that tends to overthrow, or corrupt, or undermine a spirit of love. That which hinders love to men, will hinder the exercise of love to God; for, as was observed before, the principle of a truly Christian love, is one. If love is the sum of Christianity, surely those things which overthrow love, are exceedingly unbecoming Christians. An envious Christian, a malicious Christian, a cold and hard-hearted Christian, is the greatest absurdity and contradiction. It is as if one should speak of dark brightness, or a false truth!

Seventh. Hence it is *no wonder that Christianity so strongly requires us to love our enemies, even the worst of enemies* (as in Mat-

thew v 44); for love is the very temper and spirit of a Christian: it is the sum of Christianity. And if we consider what incitements thus to love our enemies we have set before us in what the Gospel reveals of the love of God and Christ to their enemies, we cannot wonder that we are required to love our enemies, and to bless them, and do good to them, and pray for them, "that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." In the

3. *Our subject exhorts us to seek a spirit of love; to grow in it more and more; and very much to abound in the works of love.* If love is so great a thing in Christianity, so essential and distinguishing, yea the very sum of all Christian virtue, then surely those that profess themselves Christians should live in love, and abound in the works of love, for no works are so becoming as those of love. If you call yourself a Christian, where are your works of love? Have you abounded, and do you abound in them? If this divine and holy principle is in you, and reigns in you, will it not appear in your life, in works of love?

Consider what deeds of love have you done? Do you love God? What have you done for him, for his glory, for the advancement of his kingdom in the world? And how much have you denied yourself to promote the Redeemer's interest among men? Do you love your fellow-men? What have you done for them? Consider your former defects in these respects, and how becoming it is in you as a Christian, hereafter to abound more in deeds of love. Do not make excuse that you have not opportunities to do anything for the glory of God, for the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the spiritual benefit of your neighbors. If your heart is full of love, it will find vent; you will find or make ways enough to express your love in deeds. When a fountain abounds in water, it will send forth streams. Consider that as a principle of love is the main principle in the heart of a real Christian, so the labor of love, is the main business of the Christian life. Let every Christian consider these things; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things, and make you sensible what spirit it becomes you to be of, and dispose you to such an ex-

cellent, amiable, and benevolent life, as is answerable to such a spirit, that you may not love only “in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth.”