

OF
CHARITY
IN REFERENCE TO
OTHER MEN'S SINS.

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THE PREFACE.

A PROPOSAL was made to me, by some friends, for publishing of these papers; which I cannot doubt, proceeded from charity, both to the reader, whose good they intended in it; and to the author, that they could think so slender a performance was capable of serving it. I cannot, indeed, think it unseasonable, to take any occasion of recommending charity, though this subject led me only to consider one single instance of it. But if the practice of it, in this one, would redress so great an evil, what might we not expect from its universal exercise, in all cases upon which it might have influence? Even the tongues of men and angels, as (with our apostle) they are insufficient to supply its absence; so nor are they more than sufficient, fully to represent its worth. We vainly expect, from either eloquence, or disputation, the good effects, which charity alone (could it take place) would easily bring about without them. How laboriously do we beat our way in the dark! "We grope for the wall, like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day, as in the night; but the way of peace we have not known." Human wit is stretched to the uttermost; wherein that comes short, the rest is endeavoured to be supplied by anger: and all to bring us under one form, which either will not be; or if it were, could be to little purpose; while in the mean time, this more excellent way is forgotten of our foot, and we are far from it. Which shews, it is God that must cure us (the God of love and peace) and not man.

How soon, and easily would a mutual universal charity redress all? For being on one side only, it could never cement both. And limited only to a party, it is not itself, and acts against itself, divides what it should unite. But a genuine, equally diffused charity, how would it melt down men's minds, mollify their rigours, make high things low, crooked straight, and rough places plain? It would certainly, either dispose men to agree upon one way of common order, or make them feel very little inconvenience or cause of offence in

some variety. But without it, how little would the most exquisite unexceptionable form (universally complied with, in every punctilio) contribute to the churches welfare? No more to its quiet, and repose, than an elegant, well shaped garment, to the ease, and rest of a dis-jointed, ulcerous body: nor longer preserve it, than the fair skin of a dead man's body would do that, from putrefaction and dissolution.

What piety is to our union with God, that is charity to our union with one another. But we are too apt, as to both, to expect from the outward form, what only the internal, living principle can give; to covet the one with a sort of fondness, and deny the other. One common external form in the church of God, wherein all good men could agree, were a most amiable thing, very useful to its comely, better being, and the want of it hath inferred, and doth threaten evils much to be deplored, and deprecated. But this divine principle is most simply necessary to its very being. Whatsoever violates it; is the most destructive, mortal schism, as much worse than an unwilling breach of outward order, as the malicious tearing in pieces a man's living body, is worse than accidental renting his cloaths. And indeed, were our ecclesiastical contests, about matters that I could think indifferent, as long as there is such a thing, as distinction of parties, I should readily choose that, where were most of sincere charity (if I new where that were.) For since our Saviour himself gives it us, as the cognizance of christians (by this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another) I know not how better to judge of Christianity, than by charity. Nor know I where, among them that profess, there is less of either, than with them that would confine, and engross both to their own several parties; that say, here is Christ, and there he is; and will have the notions of christian, of saint, of church, to extend no further than their own arbitrarily assigned limits, or than, as they are pleased to describe their circle. We know to whom the doing so, hath been long imputed; and it were well, if they had fewer sorts of imitators. Nor doth it savour more of uncharitableness in any, to think of enclosing the truth, and purity of religion, only, within their own precincts, than it doth of pride and vanity, to fancy they can exclude thence, every thing of offensive impurity. We are never like to want occasions, even in this respect, of exercising charity: not to palliate the sins of any, but recover sinners. God grant we may use it more, to this purpose (when the case so requires) and need it less.

JOHN HOWE.

OF CHARITY,
IN RESPECT OF
OTHER MEN'S SINS:

1. Cor. XIII. 6.

Rejoiceth not in iniquity.

THE subject spoken of, must be supplied from the foregoing verses; where we find the matter all along, in discourse, is *Charity*: which it is the principal business of the whole chapter to describe, and praise. And this is one of the characters that serve (as they all do) to do both these at once. For being in itself a thing of so great excellency, to shew its true nature, is to praise it. Whatsoever is its real property, is also its commendation.

Our business here must be,—Briefly to explain and give some general account of both these, namely, charity, and this its negative character, that it rejoices not in iniquity, and—To demonstrate the one of the other; or (which is all one) to shew the inconsistency between that divine principle, and this horrid practice:—upon which the use of this piece of Christian doctrine will ensue.

I. We are to give some account both of this principle, the charity which the apostle here treats of, and of the practice which the text denies of it; rejoicing in iniquity.

First. For the former. The charity or love here spoken of, is the root of all that duty which belongs to the second table. The whole of the duty contained in both, is summed up by our Saviour in love. That of the former in that first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. Matt. 22. 37. that of the latter in this other which is

like unto it, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Upon which two we are told hang all the law and the prophets. See also Rom. 13. 10. The instances which are given in this chapter, refer to man as the object, and shew that it is the love of our neighbour which is meant.

But though it be so far human, it is however upon other accounts a real part of divine love; which we see 1. Joh. 3. 17. that apostle speaking even of love to our brother: whose hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up the bowels of compassion from him, demands, how dwelleth the love of God in that man? And David called the kindness he intended the relicts of Saul's family, the kindness of God, 2. Sam. 9. 3. This part of love is divine both in respect of its original, and of somewhat considerable in its object.

1. In respect of its original. It is a part of the communicated divine nature, from whence they that partake of it, are said to be born of God. It is most conjunct with faith in the Messiah, and love to God himself, which are both comprehended in that birth. For as it is said in the gospel of John, (chap. 1. 12. 13.) that as many as received him, (namely, Christ) to them he gave power to be called the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And in his 1. Epist. chap. 5. 1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. So it is in this latter place, immediately added as the double property of this divine production (not more separable from one another than from it) and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. And hereupon also from the in-being and exercise of this love, (though towards an object that seems very heterogeneous and of much another kind) we come to bear the name of God's children. Love your enemies—that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, Mat. 5. 44. 45. The law indeed of love to other men, though it oblige to love some above others upon a special reason, yet in its utmost latitude, comprehends all mankind under the name of neighbour or brother, as the particular precepts contained in it do sufficiently shew. Which surely leave us not at liberty to kill, defile, rob, slander, or covet from others, than the regenerate (as we count) or our own friends and relatives.

Now that principle from which we are called God's children, must be of divine original; for it is not spoken of them casually, but as their distinguishing character. So that, in this respect, they are said to be of God. It is their very difference from the children of another, and the worst of fathers, 1 Joh. 3. 10. 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. Which also shews it is not universally all love, unto which this dignity belongs. Some more noble-minded pagans that were wont to ascribe divinity unto love, have also carefully distinguished, and told us of a love that was genuine, and another that was spurious; the one akin to virtue, the other to vice; and have noted it as an abusive error of the vulgar, (Max. Tyr. Dissert.) to give the same name to God and a disease. The corruption and degeneracy of love, is indeed less than human; but the first being, and restored rectitude of it, is of an original no less than divine.

2. And even this love, though placed upon man, is divine too in respect of its object, that is, of somewhat we have to consider in it, which is most properly and strictly the object, or the inducement and formal reason why we love. God is the *primum amabile*, the *first goodness* as well as the first Being. As therefore there is no being, so nor is there any goodness, amability, or loveliness, which is not derived from him. We love any thing more truly and purely, the more explicitly we acknowledge and love God in it. Upon the view of those strokes and lineaments of the divine pulchritude, and the characters of his glory, which are discernible in all his creatures, our love should be someway commensurate with the creation, and comprehend the universe in its large and complacential embraces. Though as any thing is of higher excellency, and hath more lively touches and resemblances of God upon it; or by the disposition of his providence and law, more nearly approaches us, and is more immediately presented to our notice, converse, use, or enjoyment, so our love is to be exercised towards it more explicitly, in a higher degree, or with more frequency. As man therefore hath more in him of divine resemblance, of God's natural likeness and image; good men of his moral, holy image, we ought to love men more than the inferior creatures; and those that are good and holy, more than other men; and those with whom we are more concerned, with a more definite love, and which is required to be more frequent in its exercise. But all from the attractive of somewhat divine appearing in the object. So that all rational love, or that is capable of being regulated and measured by a law, is only so far right in its own kind, as we love God in every thing, and every thing upon his account, and for his sake.

The nature and spirit of man is, by the apostacy, become disaffected and strange to God, alienated from the divine life, addicted to a particular limited good, to the creature for itself, apart from God; whereupon the things men love, are their

idols, and their love idolatry. But where, by regeneration, a due propension towards God is restored, the universal good draws their minds, they become inclined and enlarged towards it; and as that is diffused, their love follows it, and flows towards it every where. They love all things principally in and for God; and therefore such men most, as excel in goodness, and in whom the divine image more brightly shines. Therefore it is, most especially, Christian charity that is here meant, that is, which works towards christians as such. For compare this with the foregoing chapter, and it will appear that charity is treated of in this, which is the vital bond of holy, living union in the Christian church supposed in the other. Whereby as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body being many, are one body; so also is Christ v. 12. This principle refined, rectified, recovered out of its state of degeneracy, and now obtaining in the soul as a part of the new creature, or the new man which is after God, as it hath man for its object more especially, and more or less according to what their appears of divine in him, is the charity here spoken of. Now of this divine charity it is said, and which we are now to consider.

Secondly. That it rejoices not in iniquity. Hereof it cannot be needful to say much by way of explication. The thing carries a prodigious appearance with it; and it might even amaze one to think, that on this side hell, or short of that state, wherein the malignity of wickedness attains its highest pitch, any appearance should be found of it. Yet we cannot think, but these eulogies of charity, do imply reprehensions, and tacitly insinuate too great a proneness to this worst sort of ἐπιχαριρευνησια or rejoicing in evil. The Gnosticks (or the sect afterwards, known by that name) gave already too great occasion for many more express, and sharp reproofs of this temper; which were not thrown into the air, or meant to nobody. The Scripture saith not in vain, the spirit which is in us lusteth to envy. With which, what affinity this disposition hath, we shall have occasion to note anon. Rejoicing in iniquity, may be taken (if we abstract from limiting circumstances) two ways:—either in reference to our own sins:—or to men's. Our own, when we take pleasure in the design, or in the commission, or in the review, and after-contemplation of them: converse in that impure region, as in our native element, drink it in like water, find it sweet in the mouth, and hide it under the tongue, &c. Other men's; when it is counted a grateful sight, becomes matter of mirth and sport, to see another stab at once the Christian name, and his own soul. The scope and series of the apostle's discourse, doth here plainly determine it this latter way:

or as charity which is the subject of his whole discourse, respects other men; so must this contrary disposition also. *De iniquitate procul dubio aliena, &c.* saith Cajetan upon this place: *It is without doubt, unapt to rejoice in the sins of other men; for neither can it endure one's own.* And this aptness to rejoice in the iniquity of others, may be upon several accounts. It may either proceed from an affection to their sins, from an undue self-love: or from an excessive disaffection to the persons offending.

1. From a great affection, and inclination unto the same kind of sins, which they observe in others. Whereupon they are glad of their patronage; and do therefore not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them, Rom. 1. 32. Men are too prone to justify themselves by the example of others, against their common rule. "Others take their liberty, and why may not I?" And so they go (as Seneca says sheep do) *non qua eundum est, sed qua itur, the way which is trodden, not which ought to be.*

2. From an undue, and over indulgent love of themselves. Whence it is, that (as the case may be) they take pleasure to think there are some men, that perhaps outdo them in wickedness, and offend in some grosser kind than they have done. And so they have, they count, a grateful occasion, not only to justify themselves, that they are not worse than other men, but to magnify themselves, that they are not so bad; as the pharisee in his pompous, hypocritical devotion, "God, I thank thee (that attribution to God, being only made a colour of arrogating more plausibly to himself) that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," &c. Luke 18. 11. whereby the hypocrite, while he would extol, doth but the more notoriously stigmatize himself.

3. From a disaffection they bear to the offenders; whence they are glad of an advantage against them: that they have occasion to glory in their flesh, and insult over their weakness. It must be that rejoicing in other men's sins, which is most contrary to charity, that is here more especially meant. And that is manifestly the last of these; such as proceeds from ill will to the person that offends; whereupon we are glad of his halting (which perhaps we watched for before) and when his foot slip-peth, magnify ourselves against him. Now rejoicing at the sins of other men, upon this account, may be either—secret, when only the heart feels an inward complacency, and is sensibly gratified thereby: or—open, when that inward pleasure breaks forth into external expressions of triumph, and insultation, into derision, scoffs and sarcasms.

II. And how inconsistent this is with the charity which our apostle so highly magnifies, it is now our next business to shew. And it will appear by comparing this rejoicing in other men's sins: with charity itself: and—with what it is, ever, in most certain connexion with.

First. With charity itself; and so we shall consider it,—In its own nature, abstractly and absolutely:—In relation to its original, and exemplary cause. And shall compare this rejoicing in the sins of other men, with it both ways.

1. Consider charity in its own nature; and so it is the loving one another as myself, so as to desire his welfare and felicity as my own: where we must note, that love to ourselves, is the measure of the love we owe to others. But yet we are also to consider, that this measure itself, is to be measured: for we are not to measure our love to others, by the love we bear to ourselves, otherwise, than as that also agrees with our superior rule; which obliges us so to love ourselves, as to design, and seek our own true felicity, and best good: to “lay hold on eternal life, to work out our own salvation.” If in other instances, we were not so to understand the matter (since the particular precepts extend no farther than the general one) any man might without transgression, destroy another man's goods, when he hath learned to be prodigal of what he is master of himself: and might make himself master of another man's life, whensoever he cares not for his own. And so by how much more profligately wicked any man is, he should be so much the less a transgressor.

We are not so absolutely *αὐτεξέσσιτοι*, or so much our own, that we may do what we will with ourselves. We are accountable to him that made us, for our usage of ourselves: and in making ourselves miserable, make ourselves deeply guilty also. We were made with a possibility of being happy. He that made us with souls capable of a blessed state, will exact an account of us, what we have done with his creature. He that commits a felony upon his own life, injures his prince and the community to which he belongs. The one is robbed of a subject, the other of a member that might be useful; wherein both had a right. No man is made for himself. And therefore the fact is animadverted on, and punished as far as is possible in what remains of the offender, in his posterity, from whom his goods are confiscate; in his name, which bears a mark of infamy, and is made a public reproach. How unspeakably greater is the wrong done to the common Ruler of the whole world, when a soul destroys itself! loses its possibility of praising and glorifying him eternally in the participation and com-

munion of his eternal glory! how great to the glorious society of saints and angels! from whom he factiously withdraws himself, and who (though that loss be recompensed to them by their satisfaction in the just vengeance which the offended God takes upon the disloyal, apostate wretch) were to have pleased and solaced themselves in his joint felicity with their own. So that he hath done what in him lay, to make them miserable, and even to turn heaven into a place of mourning and lamentation.

The supreme, primary law under which we all are, obliges us to be happy. For it binds us to take "the Lord only for our God; to love him with all our hearts, and minds and souls, and strength," And so to love him, is to enjoy him, to delight, and acquiesce finally, and ultimately in him; and satisfy ourselves for ever in his fulness. So that every man is rebellious in being miserable, and that even against the first, and most deeply fundamental law of his creation. Nor can he love God in obedience to that law, without loving himself aright. Which love to himself, is then to be the measure of the love he is to bear to other men: and so most truly it is said, that charity begins at home. Every man ought to seek his own true felicity, and then to desire another's as his own.

But now consider, what we are to compare herewith. Rejoicing in the sins of other men, how contrary is it to the most inward nature! to the pure essence! how directly doth it strike at the very heart and soul, the life and spirit of charity! For sin is the greatest, and highest infelicity of the creature; depraves the soul within itself, vitiates its powers, deforms its beauty, extinguisheth its light, corrupts its purity, darkens its glory, disturbs its tranquillity, and peace, violates its harmonious, joyful state and order, and destroys its very life. It disaffects it to God, severs it from him, engages his justice, and inflames his wrath against it.

What is it now to rejoice in another man's sin; Think what it is, and how impossible it is to be where the love of God hath any place. What! to be glad that such a one is turning a man into a devil! a reasonable, immortal soul, capable of heaven, into a fiend of hell! To be glad that such a soul is tearing itself off from God, is blasting its own eternal hopes, and destroying all its possibilities of a future well-being! Blessed God! How repugnant is this to charity? For let us consider what it is that we can set in directest opposition to it. Let charity be the loving of another as I ought to do myself; its opposite must be, the hating of another, as I should not, and cannot sustain to do myself. As loving another therefore includes my desire

of his felicity, and whatsoever is requisite to it, till it be attained, and my joy for it when it is; loathness of his future, and grief for his present infelicity, as if the case were my own: so hating another must equally and most essentially include aversion to his future good, and grief for his present (which is the precise notion of envy) the desire of his infelicity, and whatsoever will infer it, till it be brought about, and joy when it is, or when I behold what is certainly conjunct with it. Which is the very wickedness the text animadverts on, as most contrary to charity, the *ἐπιχαιρεκακία* which not only the Spirit of God in the holy Scriptures, but the very philosophy of pagans doth most highly decry and declaim against: which is of the same family you see with envy; and no other way differs from it than as the objects are variously posited. Let the harm and evil of my brother be remote from him, and his good be present, I envy it. Let his good be remote, and any harm or mischief be present and urgent upon him, I rejoice in it. Both are rooted in hatred, the directest violation of the royal law of loving my neighbour as myself, Jam. 2. 8. And it is that sort of *ἐπιχαιρεκακία* which hath most of horror, and the very malignity of hell in it: as the sin of another, wherein this joy is taken, is an evil against the great God (which there will be occasion more directly to consider hereafter), as well as to him that commits it; a wrong to the former, and a hurt to the latter: whereas other infelicities are evils to him only whom they befall.

2. Consider charity in relation to its original, and exemplar. And so it is immediately from God, and his very image. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, 1 Joh. 4. 16. And what sort of love is this which is made so identical, and the same thing with the very Being, and nature of God; not a turbid, and tumultuous, not a mean, and ignoble, not an imprudent, rash, and violent, least of all, an impure, polluted passion: but a most calm, wise, majestic, holy will to do good to his creatures, upon terms truly worthy of God. Good will, most conjunct with the other inseparable perfections of the Godhead: whence, with expressions of the most benign propensions towards his creatures, he still conjoins declarations of his hatred of sin, upon all occasions: that he is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor can evil dwell with him: that sin is the abominable thing which his soul loathes, that he is of purer eyes, than to look on iniquity. What can now be more contrary to the pure, and holy love, which shall resemble, and be the image of his, than to rejoice in iniquity? For as God, while he loves the person, hates the sin, men do in this case, love the sin, and hate the person.

And while this horrid, impure malignity is not from God, or like him (far be the thought from us), from whom doth it derive? Whom doth it resemble? We read but of two general fathers, whose children are specified and distinguished, even by this very thing, or its contrary, in a fore-mentioned text, 1. Joh. 3. 10. where, when both the fathers, and their children, are set in opposition to one another, this, of not loving one's brother, is given at once, both as the separating note of them who are not of God's family, and offspring, not of him as the expression is, having nothing of his holy, blessed image and nature in them (and who consequently must fetch their pedigree from hell, and acknowledge themselves spawned of the devil) and as a summary of all unrighteousness, as it is being taken (as often) for the duty of the second table, or as a very noted part of it, taken in its utmost latitude. Agreeably to that of our Saviour, Joh. 8. 44. Ye are of your father the devil—he was a murderer from the beginning—as every one is said to be that hateth his brother, 1. Joh. 2. 15. If therefore we can reconcile God and the devil together, heaven and hell, we may also charity, and rejoicing at other men's sins.

Secondly. The inconsistency of these two will further appear by comparing this monstrous disaffection of mind, with the inseparable concomitants of charity, or such things as are in connexion with it. And the argument thence will be also strong and enforcing, if that concomitancy shall be found to be certain, and the connexion firm, between those things and charity. I shall only give instance in four things, which every one that examines will acknowledge to be so connected; namely, wisdom and prudence:—piety and sincere devotedness to God, and the Redeemer:—purity: and—humility. Moralists generally acknowledge a concatenation of the virtues. Those that are truly Christian are not the less connected, but the more strongly and surely. Which connexion of these now mentioned, with charity, we shall see as to each of them severally; and at the same time, their inconsistency with this vile temper and practice.

1. For wisdom or prudence, it is so nearly allied to charity, that it is mentioned by the same name, Jam. 3. 17. The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, &c. The foregoing words, (v. 16.) shew that love is meant. These words represent the heavenly descent, and the true nature of it, both together. That it is called wisdom, shews its affinity with it, and that it partakes of its nature; dwells in a calm, sedate mind, void of disquieting passions and perturbations which it is the work of wisdom to repress and expel. Indeed

the name is manifestly intended to express, generally, the temper, the genius, the spirit of one that is born from above, and is tending thither. The contrary temper, a disposition to strife, envy, or grief for the good of another (which naturally turns into joy, for his evil, when his case alters) is called wisdom too, but with sufficiently distinguishing and disgracing additions. It is said, (v. 15.) not to be from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish; and to have the contrary effects; where envying and strife is, there is confusion *ἀναταραχία* (tumult the word signifies, or disorder, inquietness, disagreement of a man with himself, as if his soul were plucked asunder, torn from itself) and every evil work, v. 16. There can be no charity towards another (as hath been noted) where there is not first a true love to a man's own soul, which is the immediate measure of it; nor that, where there is not prudence to discern his own best good, and what means are to be used to attain it. His true good he is not to expect apart by himself, but as a member of the Christian community. Not of this or that party, but the whole animated body of Christ. In which capacity he shares in the common felicity of the whole, and affects to draw as many as he can into the communion and participation of it. So he enjoys, as a member of that body, a tranquility and repose within himself. But he is undone in himself, while he bears a disaffected mind to the true interest and welfare of the body.

Wherefore to rejoice in what is prejudicial to it, is contrary to prudence and charity both at once. Put on, (saith the apostle) as the elect of God, holy and beloved bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body. (Col. 3.12.16.) implying no true peace or satisfaction can be had, but in vital union with the body. Is he a wise, or is he not a mad man, that rejoices he hath an unbound hand or foot, or an ulcerated finger, or toe rotting off from him? or that is glad a fire or the plague is broken out in the neighbourhood, that equally endangers his own house and family, yea and his own life?

2. Piety and devotedness to God, and the Redeemer, is most conjunct with true charity. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, &c. 1. Joh. 5. 2. For the true reason of our love to the one, is fetched from the other, as hath been shewn. And how absurd were it to pretend love to a christian upon Christ's account and for his sake,

while there is no love to Christ himself? But can it consist with such love and devotedness to God, to be glad at his being affronted by the sin of any man? or to Christ, whose design it was to redeem us from all iniquity, and to bless us, in turning us away from our iniquities; to rejoice in the iniquity that obstructs, and tends to frustrate his design? Do we not know he was for this end manifested, to destroy the works of the devil? And that the works of wickedness are his works? Do we not know, the great God is, in and by our Redeemer, maintaining a war against the devil, and the subjects of his kingdom; in which warfare, what are the weapons, on the devil's part, but sins? Who but sinners his soldiers? And who is there of us, but professes to be on God's part in this war? Can it stand with our duty, and fidelity to him, to be glad that any are foiled, who profess to fight under the same banner? What would be thought of him, who, in battle rejoiceth to see those of his own side fall, here one, and there one? He would surely be counted either treacherous, or mad.

3. Charity of the right kind, is most certainly connected with purity. The end (or perfection) of the commandment (or of all our commanded obedience) is charity, out of a pure heart 1. Tim. 1. 5. Sincere christians, are such as have purified their souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; and must see, that they love one another with a pure heart, fervently, 1. Pet. 1. 22. Pagans have taught, there is no such thing, as true friendly love, but among good men. But how consists it with such purity, to take pleasure in other men's impurities, or make their sin the matter of jest and raillery?

4. A further inseparable concomitant of charity, is deep humility. We find them joined, and are required to put them on together, in the already mentioned context. Put on kindness, humbleness of mind; above all put on charity, (Col. 3.) and do find it among these celebrations of charity, that it vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up, v. 4. Nor can we ever, with due charity, compassionate the wants, and infirmities of others, if we feel not our own which if we do, though we are not, ourselves, guilty of heinous wickednesses, we shall so entirely ascribe it to divine, preserving mercy, as to be in little disposition to rejoice that others are.

III. We may then, upon the whole, learn hence, how we are to demean ourselves in reference to the sins of other men. So, no doubt, as charity doth command, and require: at least, so as it doth allow, or not forbid. We are manifestly concerned, not to offer violence to so sacred a thing; and shall be secure from doing it both these ways. We may therefore under these

two heads, take direction for our behaviour upon such occasions: namely, the actual sins of others, or their more observable inclinations thereto. We shall then say something to those who notwithstanding will take the liberty to rejoice in the sins of other men or take any, the least pleasure in observing them.

First. We take direction for our behaviour upon such occasions.

1. We should faithfully practise as to this case, such things as charity, and the very law of love doth expressly require and oblige us to. As we are,

(1.) To take heed of tempting their inclinations, and of inducing others to sin, whether by word or example. We are, otherwise, obliged to avoid doing so, and this greatly increases the obligation. What we are not to rejoice in upon the account of charity; we are, upon the same account, much less to procure. Especially take heed of contributing to other men's sins, by the example of your own. The power whereof, though it be silent and insensible, is most efficacious in all men's experience. A man would perhaps hear the verbal proposal of that wickedness, with horror and detestation, which he is gradually and with little reluctance drawn into, by observing it in other men's practice. A downright exhortation to it, would startle him. But the conversation of such as familiarly practise it, gently insinuates, and by slower degrees alters the habit of his mind; secretly conveys an infection like a pestilential disease; so that the man is mortally seized before he feels, and when he suspects no danger.

Most of all, let them take heed of mischieving others by their sins, who are men of more knowledge and pretend to more strictness than others. Perhaps some such may think of taking their liberty more safely: they understand how to take up the business more easily, and compound the matter with God. A horrid imagination! and direct blasphemy against the holy gospel of our Lord! If it were true, and God should (do what is so little to be hoped) mercifully give them the repentance, whereof they most wickedly presume, who knows but others may, by that example, be hardened in wickedness, and never repent? Yea, If thy greater knowledge should prompt thee to do, unnecessarily, that which (really, and abstracting from circumstances) is not a sin; but which another took to be so, and thence takes a liberty to do other things that are certainly sinful; yet walkest thou not charitably. Through thy knowledge shall a weak brother perish and be destroyed, for whom Christ died? Rom. 14. 15. with 1. Cor. 8. 10, 11. Suppose the process be, as from sitting in an idol's temple to idolatry so from needless sitting in a tavern, to drunkenness or other consequent debaucheries. But if the thing be, in its

first instance, unquestionably sinful, of how horrid consequences are the enormities of such as have been taken to be men of sanctity, beyond the common rate? What a stumbling block to multitudes! How much better might it have been for many that are of the Christian profession, if such had never been christians! And most probably for themselves also! No doubt it had been more for the honour of the Christian name. How many may be tempted to infidelity and atheism by one such instance! And whereas those scandalized persons do often afterwards, incur this fearful guilt of rejoicing in the iniquity of such, even that also, they have to answer for, with all the rest.

(2.) Charity requires, not only that we do not procure, but that we labour, as much as is possible, to prevent the sin of others. What in this kind, we are not to rejoice at, we should hinder. And indeed what we do not hinder, if it be in our power, we cause.

(3.) We should not be over-forward to believe ill of others. Charity will, while things are doubtful, at least, suspend. See how immediately conjunct these two things are. It thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, (v. 5, 6.) it is not imaginative or surmising. And in the following verse (on the better part, it must be understood,) it believeth all things, hopeth all things: that is, briefly, it is unapt to believe ill without ground, and hopes well, as long as there is any. But it is not so blindly partial, as to shut its eyes against apparent truth (of which more in its place.)

(4.) Much less should we report things at random, to the prejudice of others. That character of an inhabitant in the holy hill, must not be forgotten, that taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour.

(5.) If the matter particularly concern ourselves, and circumstances comply, we must have recourse first to the supposed offender himself, and (as our Saviour directs) tell him his fault between him and thee alone, (Mat. 18. 15.)

(6.) We ought to compassionate his case. Not rejoicing in iniquity, may have in it a *μεῖωσις*. More may be meant; we are sure more is elsewhere enjoined, solemn mourning, and the omission severely blamed. Ye are puffed up, (1 Cor. 5. 2.) (not perhaps so much with pride, as vanity, and lightness of spirit, as a bladder swollen with air, which is the significancy of that word) and have not rather mourned. Perhaps he is burdened with grief and shame. A Christian heart cannot be hard towards such a one in that case. We are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal. 6. 2.)

(7.) We should, as our capacity and circumstances invite or

allow (at least by our prayers) endeavour his recovery. And therein use all the gentleness which the case admits, and which is suitable to a due sense of common human frailty. Take the instruction in the apostle's own words, (Gal. 6. 1.) Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

(8.) We must take heed, upon one man's account, of censuring others; for such as we know to be faulty, those, that for ought we know (and therefore ought to hope) are innocent. A practise most absurd and unrighteous, contrary to common reason and justice, as well as charity. Yet that whereto some are apt to assume a license, upon so slender and senseless a pretence, that is, because some that have under a shew of piety, hidden the impurities of a secretly vicious life; others that are openly profane, and lead notoriously lewd and flagitious lives (who though bad enough, are so far the honestest men) do add to all their other wickedness, that folly and madness, as to count all men hypocrites that are not as bad as themselves. And reckon there is no such thing as real religion in the world. A like case as if, because sometimes spectres have appeared in human shape, one should conclude there is, therefore, no such creature on earth, as a very man.

2. But there are also other things that ought to come into practise, in the case of other men's sinning, very suitable to the case, and not unsuitable to charity. Which, though they proceed more directly, rather, from some other principle, yet are not inconsistent with this, (as the graces of God's Spirit, and the duties of christians never interfere, so as to obstruct or hinder one another,)—things which, though charity do not expressly command, yet are otherwise commanded, and which charity doth not forbid. As,

(1.) That we labour to avoid the contagion of their example: that we take not encouragement to sin from their sinning. They are not our rule. We have not so learned Christ.

(2.) That we take warning by it. And endeavour that their example may not only not be tempting to us, but that it may be monitory. We should reckon such things are our examples, for this purpose, (1 Cor. 10. 11.) and were not only, heretofore, recorded and written, but they are also, in our own days, permitted to fall out for our admonition. We that think we stand, should therefore take heed lest we fall. And must remember we are to stand by faith, and are not to be high minded, but fear. It is a costly instruction that is given us in such instances. Consider the dolour and pangs that they may perhaps

endure, who are our monitors. If they do not cry to us to beware, their case doth. Reckon (as the Psalmist (ps. 73.) It is good for you to draw near to God; they that are far from him shall perish. Labour to be sincere, living christians. Let me tell you what I have often inculcated. A mere form of godliness will one time or other betray you. And that it is not being of this or that party, conjoined with a formal, lifeless religion, that will secure you from being public scandals on earth, and accursed wretches in hell. Let every one prove his own work, and make thorough work of it, so shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another, (Gal. 6. 4.) (yea, though he may have much cause of mourning for another,) for every one must, at last, bear his own burden and give an account of himself to God.

(3.) Seriously bless God for being kept from gross and scandalous enormities. Such words savour well, spoken with deep humility, and unfeigned sense of divine favour, not with pharisaical ostentation and scorn, "God I thank thee I am not as other men." If the poor man was so transported, and poured out his soul in tears of gratitude to God, upon the sight of a toad, that he was not such a creature; how much more cause is there for it, upon the sight of a gross sinner! For, I should think, "Who made me differ? Why was not I the example? and reduced to such a condition, before which I would prefer the greatest sinless misery in all the world?"

There is a threefold degree of mercy in our preservation from more heinous and reproachful wickedness. We may owe it to nature that less inclines us to some sins, as gluttony, drunkenness, &c. to external succedaneous providence that keeps us out of the way of temptation: or to victorious grace, able to prevail, both against corrupt inclinations of nature, and whatsoever temptations also. God is to be acknowledged in all. He is the Author of nature, the Ruler in providence, the Fountain of grace. Under the first of these notions, he ought more to be eyed and praised, than the most are aware of. I could tell you, if it were seasonable, of some (and no despicable) heathen philosophy, which speaks of such an *ἐυφυία*, or goodness of natural temper (though the word hath also another signification,) that is said to carry in it, a sort of seminal probity and virtue: which, when it shall be observed how some others have the seeds of grosser vitiosity, and of all imaginable calamities, more plentifully sown in their natures, there is no little reason to be thankful for. Though all are bad enough by nature, to be children of wrath, and for ever miserable without special mercy; and though again, none have so bad natures, as to be thereby excusable in wickedness (they should endeavour, and

seek relief the more earnestly), yet some are less bad, and their case more remediable, by ordinary means; and therefore the difference should be acknowledged with gratitude. And surely there is no small mercy, in being kept out of the way of temptation, by the dispensation of a more favourable providence, that orders, more advantageously, the circumstances of their conditions in the world, so as they are less exposed to occasions of sin, than others are. Which providence I called succedaneous, for distinction's sake; because even the difference of natural tempers, is owing to a former providence. But now who can tell, what they should be, or do, in such circumstances as might have befallen them? It is a singular favour, not to be exposed to a dangerous trial, whereof we know not the issue. Nor yet should any satisfy themselves without that grace, which can stem the tide. Which they that possess, how should they adore the God of all grace?

(4.) Charity doth not forbid, and the case itself requires, that when others do grossly and scandalously sin, we should, at length, upon plain evidence, admit a conviction of the matters of fact. For otherwise, we cannot perform the other duty towards them, unto which, charity doth most expressly oblige, nor discharge a higher duty, which another love requires, that ought to be superior to all other. No charity can oblige me to be blind, partial, unjust, untrue to the interest of God and religion. When we are told in the text, it rejoices not in iniquity, it is added in the next breath, it rejoices in the truth: that is, in equity and righteous dealing. We are not to carry alike to good men and bad: and are therefore sometime to distinguish them, if there be a visible ground for it, or to take notice when they manifestly distinguish themselves. For it is necessary to what is next to ensue: namely, that

(5.) We are to decline their society: that is, when their heinous guilt appears, and while their repentance appears not. Scripture is so plain, and copious to this purpose, that it would suppose them very ignorant of the Bible, for whom it should be needful to quote texts. We must avoid them for our own sake, that we be not infected, nor be partakers in their sin and guilt. For theirs (and so charity requires it), that they may be ashamed, which may be the means of their reduction and salvation: and (which is most considerable) for the honour of the Christian religion, that it may be vindicated, and rescued from reproach, as much as in us lies. It ought to be very grievous to us, when the reproach of our religion cannot be rolled away without being rolled upon this, or that man; if, especially otherwise valuable. But what reputation ought to be of that value with us, as his that bought us with his blood? The great

God is our example, who refuses the fellowship of apostate persons, yea and churches: departs, and withdraws his affronted glory. It is pure, and declines all taint. When high indignities are offered, it takes just offence, and with a majestic shyness retires. None have been so openly owned by the Lord of glory, as that he will countenance them in wickedness. Though Coniah (he tells us, expressing a contempt by curtailing his name) were the signet on his right hand, yet would he pluck him thence. Yea and our Saviour directs, If our right-hand itself prove offensive, we must cut it off and cast it from us, Mat. 5. 30. And to the same purpose (chap. 18.) in the next words after he had said, Woe to the world because of offences: it must be that offences will come, but woe to him by whom the offence cometh. Wherefore if thy hand offend, &c. ver. 7. 8. It must be done as to a hand, a limb of our body, with great tenderness, sympathy and sense of smart and pain; but it must be done. *Delectionem audio, non communicationem;*; *I hear of love, not communion*, saith an ancient upon this occasion. (*Tertullian*)

(6.) We must take heed of despondency, by reason of the sins of others, or of being discouraged in the way of godliness; much more of being diverted from it. Indeed the greatest temptation which this case gives hereunto, is (to this purpose) very inconsiderable and contemptible, that is, that by reason of the lascivious ways of some, *ἀσελγειαίς*, 2. Pet. 2. 2. (as that word signifies, and is fittest to be read; referred to the impurities, of the gnosticks, as they came to be called) the way of truth (that is Christianity itself) is evil spoken of. But this ought to be heard (in respect of the scoffers themselves with great pity, but) in respect of their design to put serious christians out of their way, with disdain. And with as little regard, or commotion of mind, as would be occasioned (so one will express it) to a traveller, intent upon his journey, by the mowes and grimaces of monkeys or baboons. Shall I be disquieted, grow weary, and forsake my way, because an unwary person stumbles, and falls in it, and one ten times worse, and more a fool than he, laughs at him for it? We must in such cases mourn indeed for both, but not faint. And if we mourn, upon a true account, we shall easily apprehend it, in its cause, very separable from fainting and despondency. It is a discouraging thing for any party to be stigmatized, and have an ill mark put upon them, from the defection of this or that person among them, that was, perhaps, what he seemed not, or was little thought to be. But if we be more concerned for the honour of the Christian name, than of any one party in the world, our mourning will not be principally, upon so private an account. All wise

and good men, that understand the matter, will heartily concur with us, and count themselves obliged to do so. None that are such, or any man that hath the least pretence to reason, justice, or common sense, will ever allow themselves to turn the faults of this or that particular person (that are discountenanced as soon as they are known) to the reproach of a party. For others, that are aptest to do so, men of debauched minds and manners; with whom, not being of this or that party, but religion itself, is a reproach. I would advise all serious, and sober minded christians (of whatsoever way or persuasion) if they be twitted with the wickedness of any that seemed to be such and were not, to tell the revilers, "They are more akin to you than to us, and were more of your party (howsoever they disguised themselves) than of any other we know of."

Secondly. If yet, after all this, any will give themselves the liberty to rejoice at the sins of other men, and make them the matter of their sport and divertisement, or take any the least pleasure in observing them, I have but these two things, in the general, to say to them;—You have no reason to rejoice.—You have great reason for the contrary.

1. You have no reason to rejoice: for produce your cause, let us hear your strong reasons.

(1.) Is it that such are like you, and as bad men as yourselves? But

[1.] What if they be not like you? Every one, perhaps, is not; at whose sins (real or supposed) you at a venture take liberty to rejoice; what if your guilt be real, theirs but imagined? Sometimes through your too much haste, it may prove so; and then your jest is spoiled, and then you are found to laugh only at your own shadow. At least, you cannot, many times so certainly know another's guilt, as you may your own; and so run the hazard (which a wise man would not) of making yourselves the ridicule. And supposing your guess, in any part, hit right; what if those others sin by surprize, you by design? they in an act, you in a course? they in one kind of lewdness, you in every kind, they sin and are penitent, you sin and are obdurate? they return, you persevere? they are ashamed, you glory? These are great differences, (if they are really to be found) in any such case. But

[2.] If they be not found, and those others be like you throughout, every whit as bad as yourselves, this is sure no great matter of glorying, that I am not the very worst thing in all the world! the vilest creature that ever God made! Should it be a solace to me also that there are devils, who may perhaps be somewhat worse then they or I? Nor, though they fall in never so entirely with you in all points of wickedness, will that much

mend your matter? Can their wit added to yours, prove there will be no judgment day? or that there is no God? or, if that performance fail, can their power and yours, defend you against the Almighty? Though hand join in hand, the wicked will not go unpunished. Or again,

(2.) Suppose you are not of the debauched crew; is this your reason why you at least think you may indulge yourself some inward pleasure, that wickedness (you observe) breaks out among them who are of a distinct party from you, which you count may signify somewhat to the better reputation of your own?

But are you then of a party of which you are sure there are no ill men? There are too many faults among all parties; but God knows it is fitter for us all to mend, than to recriminate. Yea, but the party we are of, professes not so much strictness. No? What party should you be of, that professes less strictness? What more lax rule of morals have you than other christians? Do you not profess subjection to the known rules of the Bible, concerning Christian and civil conversation? You do not sure profess rebellion and hostility against the Lord that bought you! Doth not your baptismal covenant (which you are supposed to avow) bind you to as much strictness as any other christian? and can there be any other more sacred bond?

But if in other things, than matters of civil conversation, such delinquent persons were of a stricter profession (suppose it be in matters of religion and worship) doth that delinquency prove, that in those other things, you are in the right and they are in the wrong? Doth the wickedness of any person, against the rules of the common, as well as his own stricter profession, prove the profession he is of, to be false? Then, wherein the profession of protestants is stricter than of other christians, the notorious sins of wicked protestants, will conclude against the whole profession. And the wickedness of a christian, because Christianity is a stricter profession than paganism, will prove the Christian religion to be false. Who doubts but there may be found, of the Roman communion, better men than some protestants and of pagans better men than some christians? But then, they are better, only in respect of some things, wherein all christians, or all men, do agree in their sentiments; not in respect of the things wherein they differ. And the others are worse, in things that have no connexion with the matter of difference. Enough is to be found to this purpose, in some of the ancients, writing on the behalf of christians, which we need not, in so plain a case. Nor can it be thought, that men of any understanding and sobriety, will make this any argument, one way or other; or think them at all justifiable, that glory in other men's wickedness, upon this

or any other account. For such therefore, as are of so ill a mind, and think, being of a different party, gives them license, they ought to know, they make themselves of the same party; and that upon a worse account, than any difference in the rituals of religion can amount to. Upon the whole, your reason then (allege what you will) is no reason, and argues nothing but shortness of discourse, and want of reason; or that you would fain say something to excuse an ill practice, when you have nothing to say. But I must add,

2. That you have much reason to the contrary, both upon the common account, and your own.

(1.) Upon the common account. That the Christian world should, while it is so barren of serious christians, be so fertile, and productive of such monsters! made up of the sacred Christian profession, conjoined with (even worse than) paganish lives! And the more of sanctity any pretend to, the more deplorable is the case, when the wickedness breaks forth, that was concealed before, under the vizard of that pretence? Is this no matter of lamentation to you? or will you here, again say, your unrelatdness to their party, makes you unconcerned? If it do not justify your rejoicing, it will sure (you think) excuse your not mourning. Will it so indeed? Who made you of a distinct party? Are you not a christian? or are you not a protestant? And what do you account that but reformed, primitive Christianity? And so, the more it is reformed, the more perfectly it is itself. Who put it into your power to make distinguishing additions to the Christian religion, by which to sever yourselves from the body of other christians in the world, so as not to be concerned in the affairs of the body? If this or that member, say "I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" Is it not the Christian name that is dishonoured by the scandalous lives of them that bear that name? whose laws are they that are broken, the laws of this or that party? or are they not the laws of Christ? Will you say you are unrelated to him too? or have no concern with him? Can any party be united within itself, by so sacred ties, as all true christians are with the whole body of Christ? I know no way you have to be unconcerned in such cases, as the matter of your humiliation (when they occur within your notice) but by renouncing your Christianity. Nor, indeed, would that serve the turn. For what will you do with your humanity? Are you not still a man, if you would be no longer a christian? And even that, methinks, should oblige us to bewail the depravedness, and dishonour of the nature and order of human creatures! that they who were made for the society of angels, yea, and of the blessed God himself, should be found delighting, and wallowing in worse impurities, than those of the dog or swine.

The more strictness in morals they have (falsely) pretended to, the greater is your obligation, to lament their violating those sacred rules, (which you also profess to be subject to) and not the less. Do I need to tell you, that even among pagans, where a profession of greater strictness had once been entered into, an apostacy to gross immoralities hath been the matter of very solemn lamentation. As in the school (or church should I call it?) of Pythagoras, where, when any that had obliged themselves to the observation of his virtuous precepts, did afterwards lapse into a vicious course, a funeral and solemn mourning was held for them, as if they were dead.

(2.) On your own. For when our Saviour saith, woe to that man, by whom offence cometh, doth he not also say, woe to the world because of offences? And who would not fear, and lament his share in that woe? Are you proof against all hurt by another's sin, what if it encourage you to sin too? What if it harden you in it? How many do some men's sin dispose to atheism? and to think there is nothing in religion? And if you felt in yourselves an inclination to rejoice in them, that, itself argues the infection hath caught upon you; seized your spirits, and corrupted your vitals: so that you have cause to lament even your having rejoiced; to be afflicted, and mourn and weep; to turn your laughter to mourning, and your joy to heaviness, Jam. 4. 9. One would think them indeed but half men and scarce any christians, that can allow themselves so inhuman, and unhallowed a pleasure, as rejoicing in another's sin! It is very unworthy of a man to take pleasure in seeing his fellow-man turning beast. There is little in it of the ingenuity that belongs to human nature, to delight in the harms of others; much less of the prudence, to make sport of a common mischief. And would a christian rejoice in the disadvantages of his own cause? and in the dishonour, and reproach of the very name which he himself bears?

To conclude, one would think no more should be needful to repress in any, this inclination than to consider,—what sin is, wherein they rejoice,—and what charity is, which is violated by their doing so. What to rejoice in sin! that despites the Creator, and hath wrought such tragedies in the creation! that turned angels out of heaven! man out of paradise! that hath made the blessed God so much a stranger to our world, broken off the intercourse, in so great part, between heaven and earth; obstructed the pleasant commerce, which had, otherwise, probably been between angels and men! so vilely debased the nature of man, and provoked the displeasure of his Maker against him! that once overwhelmed the world in a deluge of water, and will again ruin it by as destructive fire! To rejoice in so hateful a

thing, is to do that mad part, to cast about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say, "Am not I in sport?" And to do that which so highly offends against charity! so divine a thing! the offspring of God! the birth of heaven, as it is here below, among us mortals; the beauty, and glory of it, as it is there above, in its natural seat: the eternal bond of living union, among the blessed spirits, that inhabit there, and which would make our world, did it universally obtain in it, another heaven. Consider from whom, and from what region that must proceed, which is so contrary to God and heaven. If any will yet, in despite of divine love itself, laugh on, at so foul and frightful a thing as sin is, it is too likely to prove the Sardonian laughter; that is (as some explain that proverb) of them that die laughing; conclude their lives, and their laughter both together; and only cease to laugh and to live in the same last breath.