

delight, Prov. xi. 20. These may take comfort in God, as God delighteth in them, both in affliction and prosperity: Ps. cxii. 9, 'To the upright there ariseth light in darkness,' not only after, but in life: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is my rejoicing, the testimony of my conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.' In death: 2 Kings xx. 3, 'Remember, O Lord, that I have walked before thee with a perfect heart, and done that which is good in thy sight.'

3. No sincerity is to be discerned but by our constant walk and course: 'He is a sun and a shield to them that walk uprightly;' and 'I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' Here the upright are described by their conversations; newness of life is the perpetual testimony of our adoption. A man may force himself for an act or two; Saul in a raptural fit may be among the prophets; therefore we are to judge by our scope and walk. A child of God may be under a strange appearance in some simple acts; so the wicked have their good moods; an aguish man hath his well days: Ps. cvi. 3, 'But blessed are they that keep judgment, and do righteousness at all times.'

SERMON XVII.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.—1 JOHN iii. 11.

IN these words we have a reason of the last clause in the former verse, why he that loveth not his brother is not of God. This is his argument: He that keepeth not God's commandments is not of God; he that loveth not his brother keepeth not God's commandments. The major is evident in itself, the minor is proved in the text, 'For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning,' &c.

In the words we have—

1. A duty, 'That we should love one another.'

2. The authority by which it is recommended to us, 'This is the message that ye have heard from the beginning.' Where—

[1.] It is a message or command, 'This is the message.'

[2.] An ancient doctrine or command, 'Which ye have heard from the beginning.'

1. The duty recommended to us, which is mutual love, 'That we should love one another;' that is, that we should love all men, but chiefly that christians should love christians.

2. The authority by which this command is enforced.

[1.] It is the declaration and message, or the commandment. Everything we read in the word of God, or hear from the word of God, is a special message sent from God: Acts xiii. 20, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent;' not brought, but sent. I allude to that of Judges iii. 20, 'I have a message from God to thee, and he arose off his seat.' Every message from God bespeaketh its own respect and reverence.

[2.] 'From the beginning:' The same phrase is used 1 John ii. 7, 'I write no new commandment unto you, but the old commandment which ye have heard from the beginning.' This is to be understood either—

(1.) From the beginning of their conversion, since ye were called to the knowledge of God. Love is one of the first lessons of christianity; for, Gal. v. 6, 'Faith worketh by love;' and Eph. i. 15, 'After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints;' expressing thereby their christianity. Ever since they became christians they were possessed with the necessity of this duty.

(2.) From the beginning of the gospel state, or ever since the faith of Christ was published and preached in the world. This is the doctrine so often and so earnestly inculcated by Christ when he was here upon earth: John xiii. 34, 35, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; that as I have loved you, so ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another;' and John xv. 12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.' And this is often inculcated by our apostle, as one that lay in Christ's bosom, and had a true sense of his Master's doctrine, and did partake largely of his spirit.

(3.) From the beginning of the Mosaical administration, even under the law, this was a duty pressed: Lev. xix. 18, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; I am the Lord.' And the neighbour was not only the Jewish neighbour, or one that lived within the pale and line of the Jewish communion, as appeareth by the language of the commandment: Mat. xx. 16, 17, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house;' which prohibitions imply the gentile as well as the Jewish neighbour. All men, considered as men in respect of nature and creation, are our brethren; so an Edomite is reckoned a brother, Deut. xxiii. 7. So in respect of commerce and occasion of intercourse they are our neighbours; to them must we perform all acts of love and mercy, as their necessities do require.

(4.) From the beginning of the world, ever since Adam; for it was not only enforced by Christ's and Moses' law, but implanted and engrafted on man's heart or the law of nature. It is a matter of natural equity to love our neighbour, to do or not to do to others as we would have done or not done to ourselves, Mat. vii. 12. The gentiles were bound to this by the law of nature. Well, then, you see love to one another was always in great esteem with God; therefore every one that is born of God should make great conscience of it. If the gentiles, by the law of nature, were bound to love others as themselves, and the Jews by the law of Moses, much more are christians under an obligation by the express command of Christ to love one another.

Doct. One great duty which God hath recommended to our obedience is to love one another.

Here I shall show you—

1. What is this love to one another.

2. How God hath recommended it to our obedience.

I. What is this love to one another? There are two branches of it: 2 Peter i. 7, 'And to brotherly kindness, charity.'

First, There is contained in it brotherly kindness, a grace wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, inclining us to love all those without exception as brethren who are made partakers of like precious faith with us. In which description note—

1. The author of this grace, and that is the Holy Spirit renewing the heart: 1 Peter i. 22, 'Seeing ye have purified your hearts through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' Naturally there is in us pride, self-love, wrath, strife, which dispose us only to please ourselves and love ourselves, without any regard to others; and besides, till our souls be purified and sanctified, we shall never love purity and holiness in others, but the upright will be an abomination to us: Prov. xxix. 27, 'He that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' They are unsuitable to them, and they are objects reviving guilt. Whatever good nature men have yet in their natural condition, they are enemies to the godly. Naturally we hate God because he is a holy God, and we hate his law because it is a holy law, and we hate his children because they are a holy people; but when the soul is purified, its love and inclinations and aversions are altered, both as to persons and things. We love God for his holiness, Ps. ciii. 1; we love his law because it is pure, Ps. cxix. 140; and we love his people because they are holy: Ps. xv. 4, 'In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.' The new creature loveth what God loveth, and hateth what God hateth.

2. There is a propension or inclination in the new nature to this love, with all the acts and fruits of it, though no outward respects invite us thereunto: 1 Thes. iv. 9, 'Concerning brotherly love, ye need not that any should write unto you, for ye are taught of God to love one another.' Instruction and persuasion doth not put us upon it so much as inclination, and the tendency of the new nature: 1 John iv. 7, 'Every one that loveth is born of God;' and 1 John v. 1, 'He that loveth him that begat, loveth also those that are begotten by him.' Those that have the new nature in any degree of strength and prevalency are inclined and disposed by it to love others, who are partakers of the same nature; so that it is a duty kindly and natural to the regenerate, flowing from an inward propension and inclination, and needeth not much outward excitement. All the saints have a new heart of one and the same making and nature, and propound unto themselves one and the same end and scope, and so their hearts are suited to one another, and take pleasure in one another.

3. The acts and fruits of this love are these—

[1.] An esteem of them, and complacency in them, as having more of God in them than other men. They are said to be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. We love God's natural image in all men; we love his spiritual image in the saints; and therefore the bond is stronger than the bond of common love: Ps. xvi. 3, 'My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight;' Prov. xii. 26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' therefore a greater object of love; as Austin said of himself and his friend Alypius, that their friendship grew more entire when they both became acquainted with Christ, and

were cemented together with the blood of Christ. *Eodem sanguine Christi glutinati.*

[2.] By an affectionate desire of their good and spiritual happiness. The philosopher telleth us to love any is to wish well to them, to desire them all the good we can; and we cannot desire a greater good to others than spiritual good, than the best good; not to wish them health and strength of body, and greatness and worldly accommodations, but grace, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and light, life, and eternal happiness: Col. i. 9, 'We cease not to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding;' Phil. i. 8, 'God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.' God knoweth the secret motions and inclinations of our inward affections. Now, when we can appeal to God for the fervency, sincerity, and spirituality of our love, and have in some measure as hearty a good-will to them as Christ had to souls when he died for them, then we have this Christ-like love which is called brotherly kindness.

[3.] As occasion serveth, we must really promote their good to the uttermost of our power; for it is a cold love that will not be at any pains and charges, or hazard any interests, for the sake of those whom we love; that contenteth itself with wishes, yea, though they be formed into prayers. No; we must not say only, Be warmed, be clothed, but really do them good, and seek their welfare as we would our own. In short, we must sympathise with them in every condition: Rom. xii. 15, 'Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep;' 1 Cor. xii. 20, we should have the same care one for another. Want of feeling is a self-excommunication, a casting ourselves out of the body. Nay, there must be not only sympathy and compassion, but real succour: Gal. vi. 10, 'Do good to all, but especially to the household of faith;' Rom. xii. 13, 'Distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality;' Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.' We must do them all possible service, as the exigencies of their circumstances and occasions do require, assisting them with our favour, countenance, labour, estates; yea, and, as we shall see afterwards, by hazarding and laying down life itself.

[4.] By conversing with them, and delighting in their fellowship, for our mutual comfort and edification. Love is a uniting thing; it draweth to communion; as the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, 1 Sam. xviii. 15; and the apostle biddeth christians to be knit together in love, Col. ii. 2. Brotherly love is such an affection as knits the hearts of the professors of the same faith to one another, as if they had but one heart and one soul in common amongst them: Acts iv. 32, 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.' And therefore it is called the bond of perfection, Col. iii. 14. The saints are bound together in a holy society, and preserved by it; and without it, as a besom unbound, they fall all to pieces.

[5.] In passing by failings and infirmities: 1 Peter iv. 8, 'And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.' Love will prevent and pass by many mutual wrongs, which otherwise would disturb the comfortable society

of the Lord's people ; therefore brotherly love is not come to its due height, growth, and fervency when it is easily interrupted by every offence. We cannot expect to converse with any in this life but some failings and wrongs it is like will be often reiterated, both against God and one another ; therefore, unless we have learned to pardon failings, we have not learned the true art of loving one another ; we must pardon the person for the wrong done to us, and we must intercede with God for the pardon of the wrong done to him. Love must cover these, not upbraiding the party with them, and concealing it from the wicked as much as may be, lest religion be disgraced.

[6.] The impartiality of this love ; we must love those without exception who are godly, whether rich or poor, prosperous or afflicted.

(1.) Whether rich or poor ; for we must not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in respect of persons, James ii. 1. No ; if it be sincere, it must be love to all the saints, Eph. i. 15, to the meanest as well as the greatest, otherwise we despise the church of God, 1 Cor. xi. 20. Meanness doth not take away christian relations. There are many differences in worldly respects between one of God's children and another, and in spiritual gifts some are weak and some are strong ; yet we must love all, for all are brethren ; all are children of one Father, all owned by Christ ; co-heirs not only with the richest and strongest christians, but with Christ himself ; therefore we should love them without respect of persons, yea, love them when no respect of our own doth invite us thereunto ; for love is not to be measured by our profit, but by a desire to profit others.

(2.) We should love them in adversity as well as in prosperity. Some seem to love good people when the times favour them, and they suffer no loss by owning them. No ; you must own them in their troubles also and persecutions : Heb. x. 33, 'Partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them who were so used.' Some suffered as the parties persecuted, others as their companions, who were not at first in the original process. So Moses left all the pleasures of the court, and his friendships there, to join with God's despised people : Heb. xi. 25, 'Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' Alas ! there are many painted butterflies and summer-friends to the gospel, who are gone when the sunshine of prosperity is gone. Brethren then do almost forget that they are brethren, if not altogether, and stand aloof, and are loath to own the afflicted.

(3.) We should love them all, whether we be obliged or disobliged ; for in brotherly kindness we are not to mind our own things, but the image of God and the glory of God, and the good and benefit of others : Phil. ii. 4, 'Look not every one upon his own things, but every man also upon the things of others.' Whether we are invited to this love by benefits or courtesies done to us, or discouraged by neglects, we are to consider our duty to people as they stand related to God, otherwise we know one another after the flesh, when we value men by personal respects to us rather than by what of God we find in them : 'If you love them that love you, do not even the publicans the same ?' Mat.

v. 46. What singular thing do we? We are monsters of ingratitude if we should do otherwise.

(4.) The objects of this love are those that are partakers of like precious faith with us, or, in one word, the brethren, or our fellow-christians. Our brethren in a natural sense are all mankind, as it is said, Acts xvii. 16, 'He hath made all nations of one blood.' There is a communion of the same nature. But in a christian sense, all the faithful are brethren in Christ, because of the communion of the same faith. Of these, some are only professors of the faith, who, in opposition to infidels, are called brethren: 1 Cor. v. 11, 12, 'If any called a brother be a fornicator, or a drunkard, or a railer, or covetous, or an idolater, with such an one eat not.' Others are really regenerate, or give hopeful evidences thereof; these are born of the same seed, adopted by the same Father, brought up in the same family, partakers of the same Spirit, estated in the same inheritance, of the same brotherhood the apostle maketh mention, 1 Peter ii. 17. Now though they should not be such as we take them to be by their profession, yet our love is acceptable to God, because we love them upon this supposition, that they are brethren.

(5.) The reduplication or qualification of this object. These brethren must be loved as brethren with such a love, and upon that account, as Christ distinguisheth between giving to a disciple and giving to him in the name of a disciple, Mat. x. 42; as one that belongeth to Christ, stamped with the image of God, and sealed with his Spirit. If it be for some external respect, though the love be real in its kind, yet we have our own ends in it; as many may show respect to the people of God to get advantage by them. Self-love is great in every one of us, and therefore in sincerity to love the brethren is a very difficult thing; most have their ends in it, and make a market of their religion. Then it is brotherly kindness when we love them out of a respect to their holiness, or because of the image of God in them. A saint is to be loved as a saint, and a disciple as a disciple, *eo nomine*, not because learned, potent, opulent, but as a child of God; if so, *a quatenus ad omne*, then we will love all in whom we see anything of Christ. Love will cover something that is unlovely in them, because partakers of the same grace, and look for salvation by the same Christ. Surely we will love them whether they be of our party or no; but (*sicut se habet simpliciter ad simpliciter, ita magis ad magis*) the more godly, the more we will love them. Many love godliness in a low degree, while mingled with imperfections,—the impurity is a part of the reason of the love,—whilst a very strict man is hated. Well, then, this is brotherly love. By this brief view of it we see it is very rare to be found amongst christians. Self-love and the love of the world have almost destroyed it; and where it is, it is not so fervent and effectual as it should be. In most persons, though professed christians, we either find no love, or if any be, a very cold one, such as will run no hazards for and with those whom we love.

I come now to speak of the other branch, charity, or love to all men, for it must not confine itself to fellow-christians only, but be diffused to all men, though they be not heirs of the same grace of life. In short—

1. This love is either *amor justitiæ*, which consists in justice and righteousness. We are not to wrong them or defraud them of their due, but so deal with them as we would be dealt with ourselves; for this is one sort and kind of love: to love my neighbour as myself, and do as I would be done by, are equivalent expressions: Rom. xiii. 7, 8, 'Render to every one their due; owe no man anything, but to love one another.' Again, there is *amor compassionis*, we must not hide ourselves from our own flesh, Isa. lviii. 7; we must be affected with their misery, both by reason of sin and affliction, relieve their wants, seek their conversion, and promote it by ourselves and others by all ways and means possible. This we owe to barbarians and wicked ones, of what nation soever; though we hate their ways, we must pity their persons.

2. From this love enemies and persecutors are not excepted: Mat. v. 44, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.' For this is to be like God, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil: Luke vi. 35, 'But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil.'

3. The fruits of this love are not only seen in bestowing temporal benefits, but to the uttermost of our power (because they are capable of eternal blessedness) making it our unfeigned desire and prayer to God, that they may be saved: Rom. x. 1, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved.' And our earnest endeavours should be to procure their spiritual good: James v. 19, 20, 'Brethren, if any one of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.'

Secondly, The reasons.

1. Why we should love all men. The reasons that may induce us are—

[1.] Equality, the actual equality of all men by nature, who were all made by the same God, and all made of one blood. Diversity of rank doth not take away identity of nature: Mal. ii. 10, 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?' So Job xxxi. 13–15, 'If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me: what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?' So Neh. v. 5, 'Our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, and their children as our children.' Why is more due to you than them? And the possible equality of all men, as to their condition and state of life: Heb. xiii. 3, 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves in the body.' Before we go out of the body there may be strange changes in the world, and God may make us as low as others.

[2.] We are to imitate God, as children do their father, Mat. v. 45. Now God loveth all his creatures, and hateth none; the more we imi-

tate God, the more we know we are children of our Father which is in heaven.

[3.] God hath so cast the world, that sometimes we need the help of others, as they need ours, that, by mutual necessities and a combination of interests, the world may be upheld. As in the body natural, no member can say to any, I have no need of thee; so also hath God disposed it in the great frame of mankind, that we may have a mutual care of one another, 1 Cor. xii. 25. As he requireth from every man a respect to the world of mankind, so he hath turned all the respects of the world of mankind upon one man. We would be glad to be loved of all the men in the world, if we could bring it to pass; and surely we may the better expect it if we have this love to all the world.

2. Why we are to love strangers: Heb. xiii. 2, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for hereby some have entertained angels unawares.' By 'strangers' he meaneth those that are far from home, in another place and country, where they have few friends, and are not well known, especially when exiled for the gospel. We find this in Abraham's and Lot's instances, who were kind to the angels, and had their recompense. Abraham's barren wife had a promise of bearing a son to him. Lot had benefit also, being saved from the flames that destroyed Sodom. Surely such a work of mercy shall not go unrewarded.

3. Why enemies? Partly because there is more reason to love them than hate them, because there are some relics of God's image in them; and God hath forgiven us greater wrongs: Eph. iv. 32, 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' We commit a sin against God, or else, upon the apprehension of the injury done us by man, we are deeper in danger than our enemy; we daily trespass against God more than they can trespass against us. God forgiveth talents, we cannot forgive pence; God forgiveth a hundred thousand, we cannot one hundred, Mat. xviii. We look that God should forgive us, and we will not forgive others. In short, though it be more comfortable to love a friend, it is more honourable to love an enemy: Prov. xix. 11, 'It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression.'

II. How God hath recommended it to our obedience.

1. It is a precept and a commanded duty, and not bare counsel and advice only. There is a great deal of difference between allowing and commanding; where a thing is allowed, *licet*, it may be done; but where a thing is commanded, *oportet*, it must be done, a necessity is laid upon us; and therefore none must look upon love as an indifferent thing, which we may practise or forbear at our own pleasure. No; it is a debt or duty by virtue of Christ's express command, a duty to Christ, a debt that we owe to God more than to our neighbour; we owe love to them as our fellow-creatures, but chiefly upon the injunction of our Creator.

2. It is a special command which Christ hath adopted into his new law. Christ calleth it his new commandment: John xiii. 34, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.' How new, since it was as old as the moral law or the law of nature? Because it was so solemnly renewed by him, and commended to their care. Laws, when new, are more regarded and obeyed. Christ would ratify it afresh,

that the law of love might never be out of date, but be looked upon as a statute in force and newly enacted, and fresh in the remembrance of his people. Or a new commandment, because pressed upon a new ground and pattern : before it was 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ;' now it is, 'As I have loved you.' The great love of Christ discovered in the gospel must leave a suitable impression on us. He came from heaven not only to represent the holy and amiable nature of God, but to propound us a pattern of love and charity. Once more, the scripture is impatient of being denied when it calleth for love to the brethren ; therefore it applieth itself to our dispositions either way. Some prize old things, others new ; therefore it telleth us, 1 John ii. 7, 8, 'I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning.' Again, 'A new commandment write I unto you ;' 2 John 5, 'Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which ye had from the beginning, that ye love one another.' It is old and not old, new and not new ; thus it plieth us on all hands, that we may look upon ourselves as deeply concerned. Some novelty is suspected, therefore he telleth them of an old commandment ; it is the same which was commanded in the law, yet solemnly reinforced in the gospel. There are some commands which are new and not old, such are the sacraments of the new testament ; some are old and not new, as the ceremonies of the law now antiquated ; some both old and new, as the precepts of the moral law, and in particular this command of love, which, though it were enjoined before, yet it is revived by Christ, and renewed and recommended by him to his disciples as a chief and singular duty.

3. It is his dying charge : John xv. 12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another.' He appropriateth it, and challengeth it as his commandment, which, though given by God before, yet he would make his own by an express charge : If my authority be of any force with you, do not entertain it with a careless indifferency, as a thing which you may neglect without any great inconvenience. The season is to be observed when those things were spoken by Christ, when he was departing from his disciples, and preparing them for his departure. Speeches of dying men are received with much reverence, especially the charge of dying friends. The brethren of Joseph, fearing he should remember old injuries, came to him with this plea, Gen. l. 16, 'Thy father did command us before he died, saying.' Let us fulfil the will of the dead. Our Lord commanded us when he died, saying, 'Love one another.' Christ foresaw how his disciples would quarrel in their Master's absence, how his work would thereby be interrupted, and their own peace ; how his religion would be exposed to reproach and obloquy by the contention of his followers ; therefore he left this charge, 'See that ye love one another.'

4. It is a comprehensive command ; for to love one another implieth all those things which concern our duty to our neighbour . John xv. 17, 'These things I command you, that ye love one another.' These things, and yet but one thing pressed, and that is to love each other. But love containeth many duties in the bosom of it : Gal. v. 14, 'All the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How is that to be understood ? There are other precepts

besides this; there are respects of love due to God, and there is justice due to our neighbour, as well as love. But love God, and we love our neighbour for God's sake; and the acts of justice which we perform to them are the fruits and products of love, and must flow from love; yea, the acts of charity, how pompous and plausible soever they be, yet if love be not at the bottom, they are not right: 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no 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.' So that all the law is fulfilled in this one word. Therefore love is called the fulfilling of the law, Rom. xiii. 8.

5. It is a duty that fitteth us to partake of the blessing which God hath commanded for his people when united: Ps. cxxxiii. 1-3, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon Aaron's head, that ran down upon the beard, that went down to the skirt of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descendeth upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.' This holy concord is a blessing both pleasant and profitable. God delighteth to pour out his graces on such a society: Mat xviii. 19, 'I say unto you, If two of you shall agree on earth touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' God will not hear one sort of his children against another; it is like 'the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirt of his garment.' There the pleasantness is described by the fragrancy of the holy ointment wherewith Aaron and his sons were anointed; it is often called the oil of gladness, because it cheered the spirits of the chief priests, and all that were present in the temple. The profit of it, ver. 3, 'As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.' It is as the dew which moistens the earth, which was a great blessing in those hot countries, and caused the fields to laugh with fatness; he mentioned Mount Hermon and Mount Zion. Hermon was a fat and fruitful place; it is usually put among the fair and pleasant pastures. There is the blessing; they have most communion with God who have most communion with one another, and all this is in order to eternal life.

6. This is a duty that doth most discover the temper of our religion, which is wholly made up of love. It is a God of love that we serve, and they have no acquaintance with him that love not their brethren: 1 John iv. 7, 8, 'Let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.' Again, 1 John iv. 16, 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Redemption by Christ, which is the great mystery of the christian religion, the most conspicuous end was the demonstration of

God's love: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' So 1 John iii. 16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us.' What is this mystery of redemption but a wonder of love? It was love stepped in, and recovered us out of that destruction and ruin wherein we had involved ourselves. What was the Son of God but love incarnate, love coming down from heaven to earth, to die for a sinful world? Now why was all this made known unto us? Only to talk of, or comfort ourselves withal? No; that we might imitate it, that the true stamp and impression of our religion may be upon our hearts: Eph. v. 2, 'Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us;' 1 John iv. 11, 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' He that seeth the true face of redemption, and understandeth the gospel and the grace of Christ, will easily be induced to see the reasonableness of such a duty. And what is the work of the Holy Ghost but to shed abroad this love in our hearts? Rom. v. 5; the intent of the ordinances, but to represent this love and seal up this love? So that we do express the true genius of our religion by love.

Use. The use is to show us the excellency, and amiableness, and beautifulness of the christian religion in both these regards, as it requireth brotherly kindness and charity. Brotherly kindness or communion of saints: some things are pleasant and not profitable, as vain delights; some things are profitable and not pleasant, as afflictions and the sorrows of repentance; some things neither profitable nor pleasant, as hatred, variance, strife; some things pleasant and profitable, as the concord of God's people. Man is a sociable creature, and religion doth mightily befriend human societies; for besides that brotherly kindness, that it requireth to be exercised among christians themselves, it requireth also love to all men, not only forbidding injustice to the names and persons of others, but uncharitableness, and those oppressions and injuries wherewith the world aboundeth. These things would be banished if men would be but true to this religion, and love their neighbour as themselves. It commands universal love and kindness among men, a readiness to forgive our greatest enemies. How easily would men be induced to pardon wrongs! how patiently would they bear a modest dissent, where in this state of frailty all men cannot force their judgments to be of another mould and size! How far would men be from doing hurt to one another, hurt no man, speak evil of no man! Yea, how beneficial and helpful would men be to one another, seeking others' good as their own, affected with one another's welfare as their own, and rejoicing in it! Oh, that the world would consider how much of christianity consists in love and doing good! Without that there is nothing so fierce, so bad, so cruel, which you may not be drawn to think, say, or do against your brother. The world is prejudiced against religion as an ill-natured thing, but there is no ground for such a prejudice, when we consider the christian religion requireth nothing but what is most fit for God to command, and most reasonable for man to obey.