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1 COR. XIII. 2.
And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.

LOVE is certainly the brightest Emblem of the divine Nature, for God is Love; and the greatest Ornament of the human. Love is the Sinew of civil Society, and religious also; without which the Comforts and Profits of both, are either much impair'd or intirely lost. Love is the Substance of the Law, and the great Scope of the glorious Gospel. All the pure Precepts of the one, and condescending Directions of the other, tend to Love, and end in it. This is the royal Law, Jam. 2. 8. If ye fulfil the royal Law according to the Scripture, thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self, ye do well. The Bond of Perfection and Badge of Christianity. By this our Lord observes, that his true Disciples may be distinguish'd from vain Pretenders. Joh. 13. 35. By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another. Love is the noblest Image of the heavenly State; There all angry Debates & unhappy Contentions are for ever banished:

N 2
There the strongest Affection, and the sweetest Concord, do for ever triumph; What, unfailing Vigour and unsating Glory!

The Apostle plainly points out the vast Importance of this noble Grace, in the Words immediately preceding our Text; where he observes, that the noblest Attainments of Knowledge and Eloquence, yea even of the Gift of Prophecy, and miraculous Faith, without Charity or Love, as the Word may be well rendered, would be no Evidences of his being a true Christian.

In discoursing upon this important Subject, I shall speak of the Nature, Kinds, Ingredients, and Effects of Charity; and then proceed to the Improvement.

1. Charity may be more generally described thus, viz. that it is the Propension or Inclination of the Heart or Will toward our Neighbour.

2. It may be thus distinguished, namely that it is either carnal, natural, civil, or Christian.

(1) Carnal is that fordid, shameful, and sinful Passion after forbidden Embraces, which springs from lawless Lust. This, without Repentance intervene, will plunge the Nocean in perpetual Ruin. This dishonours our Nature, reproaches our Religion, and will damn our Souls. 1 Cor. 6. 9. Know ye not that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, &c.

(2) Natural, is a Regard which respects Children and Parents, which even the Beasts have something of; for the want of which the Gentiles are reproved. Rom. 1. 31. Without Understanding, Covenant-breakers; without natural Affection, implacable, unmerciful.

(3) Civil, is that Affection which is only grounded upon civil Causes; when Men respect one another as Men, or as cloathed with civil Offices, or for Kindnesses received.

(4) Christian, is that whereby Christians are respected for their Christianity.

It is the two last Kinds of Charity that I intend to discourse upon.
In the Description which I gave of Charity, I observed, that it was the Inclination of the Heart towards our Neighbour: Now by Neighbour is to be understood every Man upon whom we can confer any Good. Luk. 10.29,37. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus. And who is my Neighbour? And he said, he that shewed Mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

The Order of this Charity is such, that seeing God is the primary and principal Object of Love, he is therefore the formal Reason of that Charity which we owe to our Neighbour. Next therefore after God we are to love our Selves, with that Charity which respects true Blessedness. By loving God with a Love of Union, we immediately love our selves, with that Charity which intends spiritual Blessedness; and others as it were secondarily, whom we would have partake with us of that supreme Good. Now albeit none are to be excluded from our Charity, yet it is not to be extended in a like Degree to all. It is true indeed in Regard of the Good, which we should wish to our Neighbour, there is no Imparity; because we should define that the chief Good may be conferred on all, as upon our selves; and that with the same Seriousness and Sincerity; yet there should be a Difference in the Measure and Fruits of our Charity, according to the Difference of Persons, and Occasions it is to be exercised upon. Those that fear God are to be loved above others. Gal. 6.10. As we have therefore Opportunity, let us do Good unto all Men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith. A peculiar Regard is due to our Relations, above Strangers; and that in Proportion to the Nearness of the Relation; which should manifest it self according to the Nature of the Relation: If the Relation be corporal, principally in outward Things; if spiritual, principally in spiritual Things. The Third general Head, is to speak of the Ingredients of Charity; which I think are these four, viz. Esteem, Desire, Delight, Sorrow. And

1. Charity includes Esteem. A rational Affection follows our esteeming or valuing any Person or Thing, for some real or supposed Excellency or Good we conceive to be
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in them. That which hath neither physical nor moral Good in it or annexed to it, cannot be the Object of Esteem; and that which we have no Esteem of, we can have no Charity for. Now tho’ there be various Kinds & Degrees of Excellency in our Fellow-Creatures, for which a proportionable Respect is due from us; yet there is none but who hath such a Measure of Good either natural or moral, as deserves our Esteem. The very worst of Men have immortal Souls, endowed with the noble Powers of Reason and Reflection, by which they resemble the infinite Knowledge, and spiritual Nature of the supreme Being: for there is a Spirit in Man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth them Understanding; as Job observes. By this they are capable, thro’ the Assistance of divine Grace, to know and enjoy God. They are also our Brethren by Nature, for God hath made of one Blood all Nations. Upon these Accounts we ought to esteem and value the very meanest of the rational Creation, because they are the Workmanship of God, and bear his Similitude: There are also additional Excellencies, to excite our Esteem for some, in whose Lives shine many moral Virtues. Why therefore should we set at nought our Brethren? And as to the People of God, they claim our Charity upon other Accounts: By Regeneration they are adorned with the moral Image of God; by Adoption they are admitted to the most valuable Priviledges; hereby they become the Children of God, and our Brethren by Grace, as well as Heirs of an inexpressibly rich and everlasting Inheritance. Should we then have a light Esteem of any of those Sons of God, because of accidental Differences? O no! What if some have not so much natural Abilities or acquired Learning as some others? yet the meanest of them has Wisdom to Salvation; and surely this is infinitely better than all the Knowledge of the World. Oh! the compassionate Prophet of the Church of God, makes the Simple to understand Wisdom; He causes the Heart of the raff to understand Judgment! What if they are poor in this World, this also flows from a Father’s Love, and shall be made by the Power of God to increase their spiritual and eternal Riches: Their moral Blemishes should
should excite our Pity & Compassion. We are commanded to prefer others before our selves; and to this End we should be careful to observe their Excellencies, while blind to our own.

2. Charity includes an unfeigned and earnest Desire, after our Neighbour’s Good, temporal, spiritual and eternal. Thus the Apostle John desired the present Prosperity of his beloved Gaius, 3 Epist. 2 ver. Beloved, I wish above all Things that thou mayst prosper and be in Health, even as thy Soul prospereth. Thus the Apostle Paul affectionately thirsted after the temporal and eternal Weal, of the Philippians and Hebrews, Phil. 1. 8, 9. For God is my Record, how greatly I long after you all, in the Bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your Love may abound yet more & more, in Knowledge, and in all Judgment. See also Rom. 10. 1. Brethren, my Heart’s Desire and Prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved. Now, tho’ we should wish without Diffidence, that all the aforesaid Kinds of Good should be conferred upon our Brethren, yet it ought to be with different Degrees of Intenseness, according to their different Degrees of Necessity and Excellency. We should undoubtedly be tender of their Characters and bodily Welfare; yet we should with greater Vehemence desire for them more durable and valuable Enjoyments, namely those that are spiritual and eternal. The aforesaid Desire, after our Brethren’s Benefit, is by some call’d a Love of Benevolence.

3. Charity includes a Delight or Satisfaction in our Neighbour’s Good, which by some is call’d a Love of Complacency. Joy and Complacency naturally follow the Fulfilment of our Desires, and that in Proportion to their Degrees of Intenseness. The charitable Person (in the general Course of his Life) is so far from envying his Neighbour’s honourable Character, shining Gifts, prosperous Successes, and increasing Graces, that he is really pleas’d therewith according to their different Degrees of Importance. As one Member of the Body sensibly feels the Pleasure another more immediately enjoys, and is therewith delighted. But the Conversion of Sinners to the blest God and their progress in Goodness, is peculiarly pleasing to
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to charitable and generous Souls! O this makes them exult with joyous Triumphs, resembling the angelic Hosts; who also rejoice upon the like Occasion! Luk. 15. 7, 10. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety & nine just Persons that need no Repentance. Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the Presence of the Angels of God, over one Sinner that repenteth. Of this noble Temper was the blessed Apostle Paul: O how did the Tho’ ts of the Philippians Conversion, gladden his Heart with an enduring Pleasure! Phil. 1. 3, 4, 5. I thank my God upon every Remembrance of you, always in every Prayer of mine for you all, making Request with Joy.

4. Charity includes a Sorrow for our Neighbour’s Misery, Which some call a Love of Condolence. Now this Sorrow is in some Measure suited or proportioned to the Kind of Miseries, we behold them labouring under, as well as to the Degrees of our Desire after their Welfare. It is the Duty, the Temper and Practice of charitable Persons, not only to rejoice with those that rejoice, but also to weep with those that weep, Rom. 12. 15. As one pained Member of the Body afflicts the rest, so charitable Persons are passionately affected with beholding others Misfortunes. The Sufferings of Persons in their Names, Bodies and Estates, open the Springs of their Sorrow. This was the Practice of Job, Chap. 30. 25. Did not I weep for him that was in Trouble? was not my Soul grieved for the Poor? Of this Temper of Mind was the Psalmist also, and that even towards his Enemies, Psal. 35. 12, 13, 14. They rewarded me Evil for Good, to the spoiling of my Soul; but as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was Sackcloth: I humbled my Soul with Fasting.---I behaved my self as tho’ he had been my Friend; I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his Mother. Here to we may add the noble Example of the Apostle Paul’s univerfal and unwearied Sympathy, mentioned, 2 Cor. 11. 29. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? As well as that of our Lord, Mat. 14. 14. where it is said, And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with Compassion towards them, and he healed their Sick. The original Word
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Word signifies the tenderest and most compassionate Commotion, even in his very Bowels; upon their Account. But that which especially excites the saddest Sorrows of charitable Persons, is the Consideration of their Neighbour's spiritual Miseries, and the Prospect of the eternal Pains, which are like to follow upon them. O! it breaks their Hearts and makes their Bowels bleed, so behold their poor Fellow-Creatures in a State of Wrath and Court of Sin! Rivers of Waters ran down the Psalmist's Eyes upon this Account, Psalm 119. 136. He beheld Transgressors and was grieved, because they kept not God's Word, Ver. 158. The Apostle Paul assures us in the most solemn Manner, that he had great Heaviness and continual Sorrow in his Heart, on the Account of his unhappy obstinate and ungrateful Countrymen, for whose Salvation he could be willing himself to be accursed from Christ, if that could secure it. Romans 9. 1, 2, 3. I say the Truth in Christ, I lie not; my Conscience bearing me Witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have Heaviness and continual Sorrow in my Heart; for I could wish that my self were accursed from Christ, for my Brethren, my Kindred according to the Flesh. The Love of our dear Redeemer was such as to incline him to be a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief, that he might atone for the Offences of his People: and in particular how afflicting are those Instances of our Saviour's compassionate Charity to the South of Sinners, which we find mentioned, Matthew 20. 5. And when he had looked round about with Anger, being grieved for the Hardness of their Hearts, he said unto the Axm. Bewitch forth thine Hand: And he stretched it out 1 and by Heaven than restored whole as the other. And Luke 9. 41. And when he was come near he beheld the City, and wept over it.) And how endearing is the Love of the blessed God himself, whose Mercies are said to be above all his other Works! The Apostle James observes concerning the blessed God, that he is very pitiful and of tender Mercy, James 5. 14. Πανταξαραίονοι; full of Bowels. Hence we read of the founding of his Bowels, and the turning of his Heart, when his People provoke him to inflict Judgments, Isaiah 63. 15. Where is thy Zeal, and thy Strength, the founding of thy Bowels?
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Bowels and of thy Mercies towards me? Hos. 11. 8. Mine Heart is turned within me, &c. And hence in Imitation of the Charity of the great God, we are bid to be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful; and to put on Bowels of Mercy, and to be tender hearted. Eph. 4. 32. And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

I proceed to the

Fourth General Head, which was to discourse of the Effects of Charity. And

1. Charity inclines to kind candid and favourable Sentiments of our Neighbour's Person and Actions, so far as their Nature and Circumstances can in Reason admit. It thinketh no Evil; but on the contrary, hopeth all Things, and believeth all Things that are Good: It banisheth all ill-natur'd Insinuations of our Neighbour's Speeches, Actions, and Designs; and puts the fairest and most favourable Sense upon them that can consist with Reason: instead of exposing and aggravating real Weaknesses, without urgent Necessity; it rather hides and extenuates them, and readily offers any Excuse or Apology that can be thought pertinent to that generous and truly noble Purpose. O how generous and precious is this Effect! and how subservient to the Peace, Weal and Comfort of Society! But Lord, how contrary is the Practice of a great Part of this ill-natur'd and unhappy World, who can hardly invent any Thing cruel enough (to their Mind) under the Umbrage of their Neighbours real or supposed Miscarriages, to blacken and ruin their Reputation.

2. Charity inclines to Mildness, Candor and Courtesey in Speech and Behaviour. It behaveth not it self unseemly; as the Apostle observes in this Chapter: 'It's Language is not cruel and clownish, but candid and courteous.' And therefore, as the same Apostle observes, it is not easily provoked, but suffereth long, and endureth all Things: It inclines us to poffefs our Souls in Patience under injurious Treatment, and to restrain and bury our angry Resentments. Hence we are inform'd, that many Waters cannot quench Love, nor the Floods
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Floods drown it, Cant. 8. 7. And hence we are entreated, Eph. 4. 2. to walk with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love.

3. Charity makes it's Possessor ready upon all Occasions, to do his Neighbour Good. Hence we are commanded, not to love in Word and Tongue (only) but in Deed and Truth. Therefore the Apostle observes in the 6th Verse of this Chapter, that Charity is kind; and truly so it is, to the Souls and Bodies of Men. And

(1) The charitable Person labours to do Good to his Neighbour's Soul, morally, by proposing of Good to be performed by him with suitable Motives and Directions, by which he may be brought to it, either by teaching if he is ignorant, or comforting if afflicted, or by Reasoning and Reproof if he errs in Principle or Practice, or by examining if he is ignorant of his spiritual State, or by exhorting if he is slothful in doing Good, and especially by a good Example exciting to do the like.

(2) The charitable Person endeavours to do Good to his Neighbour's Body, physically, by such Acts of Kindness and Beneficence, as have a Tendency thereto. Heb.13.16. To do Good and communicate forget not, for with such Sacrifices God is well pleased. The charitable Person is liberal in his Kindness, as the Sun of his Light and Influence; and when his outward Ability fails, it is more than made up by the generous Sentiments and Wishes of his Soul, as well as Endeavours of his Life, in pressing others to Beneficence. True Charity will incline us to loose the Bands of Wickedness, undo the heavy Burdens, and let the oppressed go free; to draw out our Soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted Soul, Isai. 58. 6, 10.

Here let me mention for Illustration-fake a few Examples.

(1) That of Job is memorable, Chap. 29. 11, 17. (2) That of our Saviour who went about doing Good to the Souls and Bodies of Men. He instructed the ignorant, comforted the sorrowful, healed the diseased, and fed the hungry; and that sometimes at the Expense of Miracles. The Apostles also endeavoured to succour Men under outward
ward Miseries; which appears by the Collection for the poor Saints at Jerusalem, which they forwarded: But their Charity was especially fixed upon Man's precious Souls; in which Respects tho' they themselves were poor in Temporals, yet they made many rich in Spirituals, by their unwearied Labours.

4. Charity prefers the publick Good to a private Interest. Hence the Apostle observes in the 5th Verse of this Chapter, that Charity seeks not her own Things, i.e. neither only nor principally. Charity enlarges and ennobles the Mind of Man, and reduces the whole World within the Compass of its Care, in Comparison of which any Person's private Interest is as inconsiderable, as one Man compared with the whole World. And as it is so in itself, thus it is also in the Esteem of the truly charitable Person, whose noble Soul is sublimated by generous Love, above the fordid Sphere of selfish Considerations, to desire and seek with Sincerity, so far as he hath Opportunity, and Capacity, the Good of his whole Species. And this indeed is no more than what the great God requires of us, 1 Cor. 10. 24. Let no Man seek his own: but every Man another's Wealth. And Phil. 2. 4. Look not every Man on his own Things, but every Man also on the Things of others. And especially the publick and valuable Interests of the Church of God are very dear to charitable Persons. The Psalmist expresses his Concern that Way, to the following Effect; If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right Hand forget her Cunning, if Jerusalem be not my chief Joy.

In order to promote our Neighbours Good, Charity in- clines to Self-denial and Condescension. To compass the spiri- tual and eternal Good of Mankind, the charitable Apostles freely laid down their Honours and Interests, their Liberties and Lives: They pass'd thro' Dishonour and evil Report, being generally accounted the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all Things; they were strip'd of all the Ease and Emoluments of human Life; exposed to Hunger and Nakedness, Scourging, Bonds and Imprison- ments; and in the mean Time cover'd with a Cloud of Reproach and Ignominy; in Perils, Travels, Labours and Watchings,
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Watchings, often; and at last exposed to cruel Deaths; And yet all this they courageously undertook, and patiently endured, in order to spread the Redeemer's Gospel, and save the Souls of Men from eternal Ruin. It is justly observed concerning them, even under their many Troubles, that tho' they were sorrowing, yet they were always rejoicing, and tho' they were poor, yet they made many rich. The Apostle Paul shews the Greatness of his Condescension in the following Places of Scripture, 1 Cor. 9. 19. For the I be free from all Men, yet have I made my self Servant unto all, that I might gain the more. To the same noble Purpose he further observes in the same Chapter, That to the Jews he became a Jew; and to those that were without Law, as without Law. And in the last Verse of the aforesaid Chapter, he says, Even as I please all Men in all Things; not seeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be saved. And this the Apostle prescribes as a Rule to others, Rom. 15. 1, 2. We then that are strong ought to bear the Infirmities of the Weak, and not to please our selves. Let every one of us please his Neighbour for his Good to Edification. 5. Charity inclines those that possest it to Humility; Hence it's said in the 4th Verse of this Chapter, that Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. No! it's so far from this, that charitable Persons are willing to do the meanest Offices, that may serve the Interests of their Friends. Charity inclines the greatest Souls and noblest Beings, freely to serve their Inferiors. It was this that inclined the Apostles to becomes the Slaves of Men, as it were, in order to secure their everlasting Interests. It is this that inclines the holy Angels, those Principalities and Powers, to minister to the Saints of God, in this Wilderness, that they may guide and guard them to Glory. 'Twas this that inclin'd the innocent honourable and eternal Son of God, to leave his Father's Bosom, and stoop as low as Earth, by uniting it to his Deity; hereby his divine Glory was for a Time obscured, and the Son of God assum'd the Form of a Servant, was made a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief; hereby he who was rich in all his Father's essential Excellencies, became poor, that we thro' his Poverty might
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be rich. 'Twas Charity inclin'd him to wash his Disciples Feet for our Example; and to lay down his precious Life to purchase their Salvation. It's Charity that inclines the great God himself, who inhabiteth Eternity, to dwell in the humble Heart, (Isai. 57. 15.) to humble himself to behold the Things that are done in Heaven and Earth; to take such gracious and continual Care in preserving of, providing for, and bearing with, such mean Dust as we!

Why therefore having such noble Examples, should we not serve one another by Love? (Gal. 5. 13.) and condescend to Men of low Degree, in performing the humblest Offices that may serve their Interest, or supply their Necessity!

Hence we may learn, 1. The Excellency of the Christian Religion; the Scope of which is to inculcate that Virtue of Charity, which is as consonant to the moral Perfections of the divine Nature, as it is conducive to promote the Good of Society.

2. Seeing Charity is the great Character of true Christianity, without which we can have no reasonable Claim thereto, 1 Joh. 3. 14, 15. He that hateth his Brother is a Murderer—. And Ver. 17. But who's hath this World's Goods, and feareth his Brother have Need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him; how dwelleth the Love of God in him? 1 Joh. 4. 20. If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, be is a Lyar—: We should be therefore invited to examine our selves, whether we have the aforesaid Ingredients and Effects of Love, viz. such Esteem, Desire, Delight, Sorrow; such favourable Sentiments of Mind, Courtesy in Speech and Carriage, Beneficence and Kindness in Action; a preferring of the publick Good to our private Interests, Self-Denial and Condescension in promoting it; and Humility. To these, for a further Discovery of our State, I shall add a few more Characters of Christian Charity, by which let us try our selves. And

1. True Charity to Man springing from the Love of God, and is exercised with a Regard to his commanding Authority. Love to God, where it is special and transcendent, will necessarily constrain us to love our Brethren.

2. It
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2. It especially eyes the moral Image of God in Man, and is proportioned to the Degrees it perceives thereof to be in them. Tho' the charitable Person loves the whole rational Creation with a Love of Benevolence, and as Occasion serves with a Love of Beneficence; yet he also respects pious Souls with a Love of special Complacency. These are the excellent Ones of the Earth, in whom is all his Delight: and as he loves all that are truly Good, whatever Denomination they bear, peculiarly and sincerely; so according to the Degrees of their Goodness, is his Esteem and Love increased.

3. True Charity will not only dispose to do our Neighbour Good in Temporals and Spirituals, but also to bear with his Weaknesses.----Those who can justly apply to themselves these Signs of Christian Charity, may be comforted in this, that their Love is an Evidence of their gracious State, and Communion with the divine Majesty. 1 Joh. 2. 10. He that loveth his Brother, abideth in the Light;----And Chap. 4. 16. God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God. In the mean Time, it ought to be observed, that we have no sufficient Reason to think Persons to be spiritually Good, unless they be found in the main doctrinal Principles of Religion; for surely Truth is the Foundation of real Holiness, without which all Appearances of Piety, how great soever, may be reasonably suspected. But alas, is there not Reason to lament it, if it were possible with Tears of Blood, that the very contrary to what has been now express'd, too generally prevails among some, who profess the same blessed Truths of God.

I proceed to a Use of Exhortation.

O let us all be intreated to seek after the Truth, Increase, and Exercise of this noble Grace of Love and Charity, in it's whole Extent and utmost Latitude; and that for the following Considerations.

1. Because this Commandment we have from God, that he who loveth him, should love his Brother also. 1 Joh. 4. 21. Should not this have some Influence upon us, who are his Creatures; who have deriv'd our Beings from his Almighty
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Almighty Power, and all our Blessings from his gracious Providence, and whose Lives and Happiness depend on his Favour!

2. Such is the Excellency of Charity, that it is the very Sun and Fulfilment of the Law of God, the very Soul and Spring of all the Duties we owe to our Neighbour. So that not one of them can be genuine and acceptable, unless it proceed from Charity. Gal. 5. 14. For all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. 'Charity (faith a learned Writer) gives Worth, Form and Life to all Vertues; so that without it no Action is valuable in itself, or acceptable to God. Save it from Courage, and what is that but the Boldness and Ferocity of a Beast? from Meekness, and what is that but the Softness of a Woman, or Weakness of a Child? from Courtesey, and what is that but Affectation or Artifice? from Justice, and what is that, but Humour or Policy? from Wisdom, and what is that but Craft and Subtilty? what meaneth Faith without it, but dry Opinion? what Hope, but blind Presumption? what Alms-Doing, but ambitious Ostentation? what undergoing Martyrdom, but Stiffness and Sturdiness of Resolution? What is Devotion, but glossing and mocking with God? What is any Practice, how specious soever, in Appearance, or materially Good, but an Issue of Self-conceit, or Self-will, of fervile Fear, or mercenary Design? Thus far he. But

3. Charity is of such absolute Necessity, that without it we must expect to perish to all Eternity. 1. Job. 3. 15.

4. Charity is just and reasonable; as may appear by the following Particulars,

(1) There is some Propensity to it arising from the very Frame of our Nature; which appears from the Power that Tragedies have over our lower Passions: Our Grief is somewhat mov'd whether we will or not, when we hear of awful Accidents, that have befallen others, in which we our selves are not at all concern'd; and much more when we behold them conflicting with uncommon Calamities! And no doubt the natural Desire we have after Society, is partly owing
othing to a Disposition, that is in all Mankind, to communicate Good to others. Hence ariseth a Complacency of Mind upon our doing of Good to others, and an Uneasiness from the contrary. The Apostle confirms what has been observ’d under this Head, Rom. 12. 10. Be kindly affectioned (φιλόσοφος) which supposeth that there is a natural Affection in Men, which it is our Duty to exercise and increase.

(2) Every one is inclin’d to desire and expect Love from others, as a Debt due to them; and if it is not paid, they are apt to be offended. When we are under Reproach, Misery and Want, we take it hard if Sympathy & Succour is refus’d. This shews plainly that according to our own Judgment, we owe the like to others in Extremity: for it is an unjustifiable Weakness to expect or desire for our selves, what we deny to others, who have as good a Right to Kindness as we. And this our blessed Lord himself confirms by that golden Rule of Love, which he has given for our Direction, Mat. 7. 12. Therefore all Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets. Than which nothing can be more equal and rational.

(3) All Men are Brethren and Representatives, Partakers of the same Nature, Possessors of the same Powers and Faculties, liable to the same Accidents, and subject to the same Laws. And is it not reasonable to shew Kindness to our Brethren, and to regard our own Pictures? and on the contrary most unnatural and cruel to wrong either? But if we are true Christians, there are additional Engagements upon us to exercise Charity to the People of God, seeing they are with us Children of one Father, Possessors of the same divine Nature, Pilgrims to the same Paradise, and Heirs to the same Inheritance, and thereby our Brethren in the noblest Sense.

(4) Charity is an easy Duty, consisting chiefly in Good-Will. ’Whence the poorest Beggars is as able to perform it as the mightiest Monarch: Tho’ his Hand be not so full of Alms, his Heart may be as full of Love’. This is what God principally Respects, and what he will accept of when there is no Ability to shew other Succour.

’Twas
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'Twas on this Account the Widow's Mites were so highly valued and honourably mention'd in sacred Writ. I love made them far outweigh all the golden Donations of the great, rich and honourable. And we are assured by the true and faithful Witness, that even a Cup of cold Water flowing from this noble Principle, will not be buried in Oblivion, or miss a gracious Reward. Mat. 10. 42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little Ones a Cup of cold Water only, in the Name of a Disciple, Verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his Reward. And indeed Charity is the surest and easiest Way of performing all those Duties we owe to our Fellow-Creatures. If we would hasten through the Circle of Duty, let us Love, and all is done: Do we want to serve God with Delight and Constancy, then let us Love. For that is the only enduring Source of voluntary, spiritual and steady Obedience, other Motives are mean and mercenary, and do but produce an unwilling ignoble and unstable Service. Effects must needs vary with their Cause: Now external Slavish and mercenary Motives to religious Action, are as inconstant as the Wind; and therefore nothing that is stable can be expected from them. Do we want to be prepared for Suffering? O! then let us Love, and we shall be willing to endure any Thing for Christ; for many Waters cannot quench Love. Do we want to make Progress in Holiness? O! then let us Love. That is the Sum of the Law, and Bond of Perfection.

(5) Charity is pleasing to God, not only in that it conforms us to his moral Excellency, but also because it is an Expression of our Love to him, when for his Sake we shew Kindness to his Friends and Servants; and thus he informs us he accepts of as done to himself, Mat. 25. 34, 40. Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World. And the King shall answer and joy unto them, Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me. And certainly the contrary Practice is a slinging of Christ.

6. Charity
6. Charity ennobles and perfects our Nature; adorns and beautifies our Souls, it enlarges the Mind of Man, and fills it with great and generous Projects, worthy of its Dignity and Design of being; it grasps the whole Universe in its kind Embraces, and aims at a universal and immortal Good.

Charity likens us to the noblest Creatures the Angels of God, those glorious Nobles of the Court of Heaven, who with incessant Delight labour to promote our Good, and that without any Hopes of Recompence from us; yea, Charity likens those that are possessed of it to the glorious God himself, who is the great Original of all Good and Excellency; who tho' he be infinite in Purity and Self-Sufficiency, and so uncapable to receive any Benefit from his Creatures, who are unworthy of his Notice, and whose Goodness extends not to him; does notwithstanding freely vouchsafe innumerable and unwearied Benefits upon them, and bear with their Affronts and Offences. What is Charity but Goodness extending its kind Influence to proper Objects without low and sneaking Designs? Such is its amiable and venerable Majesty, that it can't be beheld without Admiration. Wit, Power and Grandeur, without this are mean and ignoble, and what fordid Creatures, namely Pagans, Turks, and Devils possess.

On the contrary, Uncharitableness debases, degrades, and defiles the noble Soul of Man, by making Self the Center of all his Pursuits; the Compas of all his Cares and Projects is meanly contracted to that pitiful Point: the whole Business of his Soul is to make Provisions for his Body, for this he acts like the crafty Fox, or cruel Wolf, using either Fraud or Force to catch his Prey. Again, Charity is exceeding advantageous, in as much as it prevents Strife and Contention, which flow from the contrary Disposition: and are not Peace and Quiet desirable Things? It also hath a natural Tendency to procure Friendship. Love is a Kind of Loadstone, which draws Persons by a gentle Violence to love us again; for who can withstand the Charms of a generous Charity, that have the least Remains of Humanity left in them? Again, Charity
Charity Recommended.

Charity will sweeten every State of Life, and make them safe and profitable: It will incline us to answer the Design of Prosperity by succouring the Indigent, and yield Pleasure in so doing; but temper'd with a View of our Neighbour's Calamity. It also helps in Adversity, not only by the Sweets of the divine Presence, and inclining us to submit to his sovereign Will, but by a Complacency in others Successes. But Uncharitableness is the very Reverse.

'Charity is indeed a sure, easy and safe Way, to the Possession of all good Things.' 2 Cor. 6. 10. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all Things. Does not your Neighbour's Wealth enrich you, if you feel Content in his possessing it; and his Honour advance you, if you feel a Complacency in it? Neither is this Property only imaginary, but real; for how is Property in Things otherwise considerable, but for the Content it brings? Again, Charity frees our Souls from those gloomy Passions of Anger and Revenge, which eclipse their Beauty, and disturb their Peace, and settles the Mind in a Serene Calm, and keeps the lower Passions in a pleasing Harmony. Gal. 5. 22. The Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace. If therefore we love our Selves, we must love others, and do them Good. By Complacency we partake of their Pleasures and Profits, whether they will or not; and by our Courtesies and Kindness, they will be inclin'd, unless they be Monstros of Ingratitude, to help us in Extremity; and to live in Peace and Amity with us. Furthermore, our Kindness to them is like to engage their Prayers in our Favour; which if they are pious, are of great Importance; for the fervent Prayers of the Righteous avail much. If the Curses and Complaints of the opprest do reach the Ears of God, Jam. 5. 4. Behold the Hire of the Labourers, which have reaped down your Fields, which is of you kept back by Fraud, crieth; and the Cries of them which have reaped, are enter'd into the Ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and pull down Vengeance upon Oppressors: How much more will the Intercessions of the pious Poor, pierce the Heavens,
Heavens, and bring down Blessings on the Charitable? But were no such profitable Fruits following upon the Exercise of Charity, it's indeed eligible for it's own sake: for it carries a Reward, a Heaven in it's Bosom, even that Calm which in some Measure constitutes the Happiness of the glorified Saints and Angels, and even of God himself! O then, let us endeavour to obtain and increase this noble Grace! To this End, let us seriously consider the Advantages that follow upon it, and the Disadvantages which attend the Neglect thereof. Let us therefore exercise Love to God and Christ, and earnestly beg this Grace of Love to our Brethren, and endeavour after it as far as we can.

But my very dear Brethren! Do not imagine that I have been by this Discourse, inciting you to an unreasonable Charity; i.e. to look upon Persons to be truly gracious, when they are unfound in the main Principles of Religion; and so to respect them as such, because of their fairShew in theFlesh! No! no! This would prove a great Snare to your Souls: For when theAffections are inflamed, the Judgment is apt to be secretly byassed in Favour of the Objects of our Love. Tho' Charity hopes all Things, yet it is not stone-blind: We must examine well Men's Principles, before we give a loose to our religious Passions towards them. To be suspicious when we have Reason for it, is a godly Jealousy, and very necessary for our own Security; especially in these perilous Times in which we live. The Charity I have been inciting to, is such as consists with our Regard to Truth, and to our own Preservation. It is a common saying, and a very just one, That Charity should begin at Home. Love to our selves is made by our Lord, the Rule of our Love to our Neighbour.

I conclude with the Exhortation of Paul, to the Ephesians, (Eph. 5:1,2.) Be ye therefore Followers of God as dear Children, and walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an Offering and a Sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling Savour.

THE END.