

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS 13

This chapter is taken up in the commendation of the grace of charity, or love, which is preferred to all gifts whatsoever; is described by its properties and effects, and particularly its duration; on which account it is represented as more excellent than other principal graces. The apostle prefers it to gifts, by which it appears to be the more excellent way, he speaks of in the latter part of the preceding chapter: he begins with the gift of tongues, which without charity makes a man noisy, but not spiritual, (~~4630~~ 1 Corinthians 13:1) he next mentions the gifts of knowledge of the mysteries of the Gospel, and of preaching them; and also the gift of working miracles, on the account of which a man thinks himself something, and yet with all these, not having the grace of love, he is nothing, (~~4632~~ 1 Corinthians 13:2) to which he adds alms deeds and martyrdom, and observes, that a man may do the one in the most extensive manner, and suffer the other in the most dreadful shape; and yet if love be wanting, from whence, as a principle, all actions and sufferings should flow, these will be of no avail, (~~4638~~ 1 Corinthians 13:3) and then the apostle proceeds to describe and commend this grace, by its effects and properties, and that in sixteen particulars; by which it appears to be exceeding useful, and what adorns and recommends the person possessed of it, (~~4630~~ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8) and enlarges upon the last, namely, the duration and perpetuity of it; showing that the gifts of knowledge, speaking with tongues, and preaching, shall fail, but this will not, (~~4638~~ 1 Corinthians 13:8) the failure of these gifts he proves from the imperfection of them, which therefore must be removed in a perfect state of things, (~~4630~~ 1 Corinthians 13:9,10) this he illustrates, by comparing the present imperfect state to childhood, and the future one to manhood, which he exemplifies in himself, (~~4631~~ 1 Corinthians 13:11) the imperfect knowledge of the one he compares to looking at objects through a glass, and to an enigma, riddle, or dark saying; and the perfect knowledge of the other, to seeing face to face, without any artificial help, (~~4632~~ 1 Corinthians 13:12) and he concludes this excellent commendation of charity by observing, that it is not only preferable to gifts, but even to graces, and these the more eminent, and which are

abiding graces too, as faith and hope; and yet charity exceeds these, both as to its duration and use, (~~4633~~1 Corinthians 13:13).

Ver. 1. *Though I speak with the tongues of men*, etc.] That is, of all men, all languages that men anywhere speak, or have been spoken by them. The number of these is by some said ^{f247} to be “seventy five”; but the general opinion of the Jews is, that at the confusion of languages at Babel, they were seventy; for they say ^{f248}, that then

“the holy blessed God descended, and “seventy angels” surrounding the throne of his glory, and confounded the languages of seventy people, and every nation of the seventy had their own language and writing, and an angel set over each nation;”

whether this may be the reason, why the tongues of angels are mentioned here with those of men, let it be considered. Mordecai, they say ^{f249}, was skilled in all these seventy languages, so that when he heard Bigthan and Teresh, who were Tarsians, talking together in the Tarsian language, he understood them. The same is said ^{f250} of R. Akiba, R. Joshua, and R. Eliezer; yet, they say ^{f251}, that this was one of the qualifications of the sanhedrim, or of such that sat in that great council, that they should understand these seventy languages, because they were not to hear causes from the mouth of an interpreter. It is affirmed ^{f252} of Mithridates, king of Pontus and Bithynia, that he had “twenty five” nations under his government, and that he so well understood, and could speak the language of each nation, as to converse with men of any of them, without an interpreter. Apollonius Tyaneus ^{f253} pretended to understand, and speak with the tongues of all men; such a case the apostle supposes here, whether attained to by learning, industry, and close application, or by an extraordinary gift of the Spirit, which latter seems to be what he intends; and the rather he mentions this, and begins with it, because many of the Corinthians were greatly desirous of it; some that had it not, were dejected on that account; wherefore to comfort them, the apostle suggests, that the grace of love which they were possessed of, was abundantly preferable to it; and others that had it were lifted up with it, and used it either for ostentation or gain, or to make parties, and not to the edification of their brethren; which showed want of love, and so were no better than what the apostle hereafter asserts: what he says here and in the following verses, is in an hypothetical way, supposing such a case, and in his own person, that it might be the better taken, and envy and ill will be removed: he adds,

and of angels; not that angels have tongues in a proper sense, or speak any vocal language, in an audible voice, with articulate sounds; for they are spirits immaterial and incorporeal; though they have an intellectual speech, by which they celebrate the perfections and praises of God, and can discourse with one another, and communicate their minds to each other; (see ^{<A18>}Isaiah 6:3, ^{<A18>}Daniel 8:13) and which is what the Jews ^{f254} call,

“**bl h rwb̄yd**, “the speech of the heart”; and is the speech (they say) **μyrbdm μykal mhç**, “which the angels speak” in their heart; and is the “pure language”, and more excellent than other tongues; is pleasant discourse, the secret of the holy seraphim — and is **μykal mh j yç**, “the talk of angels”; who do the will of their Creator in their hearts, and in their thoughts:”

this is not what the apostle refers to; but rather the speech of angels, when they have assumed human bodies, and have in them spoke with an audible voice, in articulate sounds; of which we have many instances, both in the Old Testament and the New, wherein they have conversed with divers persons, as Hagar, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Manoah and his wife, the Virgin Mary, Zechariah, and others; unless by the tongues of angels should be meant the most eloquent speech, and most excellent of languages; or if there can be thought to be any tongue that exceeds that of men, which, if angels spoke, they would make use of. Just as the face of angels is used, to express the greatest glory and beauty of the face, or countenance, (^{<A18>}Acts 6:15) and angels’ bread is used for the most excellent food, (^{<A18>}Psalm 78:25). Dr. Lightfoot thinks, and that not without reason, that the apostle speaks according to the sense and conceptions of the Jews, who attribute speech and language to angels. They tell us ^{f255} that R. Jochanan ben Zaccai, who was contemporary with the apostle, and lived to the destruction of Jerusalem, among other things, he was well versed in, understood **trç ykal m tj yçw μydç tj yç**, “the speech of demons”, and “the speech of the ministering angels”: and which they take to be the holy tongue, or the Hebrew language; they observe ^{f256}, that

“the children of men (by whom I suppose they mean the Israelites) are in three things like to the ministering angels; they have knowledge as the ministering angels, and they walk in an erect stature as the ministering angels, **trçh ykal mk çdqh ^wçl b**

μυρpsmw, “and they speak in the holy tongue, as the ministering angels”.”

They pretend that the angels do not understand the Syriac language; hence they ^{f257} advise a man,

“never to ask for what he wants in the Syriac language; for (says R. Jochanan) whoever asks for what he wants in the Syriac language, the ministering angels do not join with him, for they do not know the Syriac language;”

and yet, in the same page, they say that Gabriel came and taught one the seventy languages: but let the tongues of angels be what they will, and a man be able to speak with them ever so well,

and have not charity; by which is meant not giving of alms to the poor, for in (^{433B}1 Corinthians 13:3) this is supposed in the highest degree it can be performed, and yet a man be destitute of charity; nor a charitable opinion of men as good men, let their principles and practices be what they will; for this is not true charity, but rather uncharitableness, and acting the most unkind part to their souls, to consider and caress them as such, when destruction and ruin are in all their ways; but the grace of love is here meant, even love to God, and love to Christ, and love to the saints, which is a grace implanted in regeneration by the Spirit of God; and which, if a person is destitute of, as he may, who has never so great a share of learning, or knowledge of the languages, or even the extraordinary gift of speaking with divers tongues; all his learning is but an empty sound, his eloquence, his diversity of speech, is but like the man’s nightingale, “vox & praeterea nihil”, a voice and nothing else; or as the apostle here says, supposing it was his own case,

I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; or rather, “the loud”, or “high sounding cymbal”, as in (^{390B}Psalm 150:5) which the Septuagint there render by *κυμαλοισ αλαλαγμου*, a phrase of the same signification with this: for not that little tinkling instrument used by the Heathens is here meant; though what is here said of the cymbal agrees with that; which made a tinkling noise when shaken, or struck with anything, or with one against another; and was an hollow vessel of brass, in form of the herb called “navel wort” ^{f258}; but rather that musical instrument which bore this name, used in the Jewish worship under the Old Testament; and which, the Jews ^{f259} say, was an instrument that gave a very great sound; and that

the sound of it was heard as far as Jericho ^{f260}, which was some miles from Jerusalem; they say ^{f261}, that the cymbals were two brazen instruments or pieces of brass, which they struck one against another, and so made a sound. The cymbal was also used in the worship of Heathen deities, and the allusion here in both the things mentioned, is either to the tinkling of brass, and the sounding of cymbals in the worship of idols ^{f262}; which were mere empty sounds, and of no avail, as is a man's speaking with divers tongues, destitute of the grace of love; or to the confused clamours and noises made upon going to battle, just upon the onset, by drums and cymbals, and *ηχειοις χαλκοις*, hollow sounding pieces of brass; as appears from Polytenus, Plutarch, Appianus and others ^{f263}; to which confused noises the apostle compares the most eloquent speech without love. The Greeks had a play they used at feasts, I will not say the allusion is to it here, but leave it to be thought of, which they call "Cottabisis"; when, the liquor that was left, they cast into cups of brass, and such whose liquor made the greatest sound in the cup, fancied himself to be loved again, by the person he loved ^{f264}: sounding brass and tinkling cymbals are inanimate things, things without life, as all such persons are destitute of spiritual life, who are devoid of the grace of love; and though they, by an extraordinary gift, and under a divine impulse, speak with divers tongues, they are but like hollow vessels of brass, and sounding cymbals, which only make a noise when they are stricken, and what they give is a mere empty sound, which is of no profit to themselves; they cannot hear, nor be delighted with it, but are rather hurt, being worn out thereby; nor of no great advantage to others, unless they give a musical sound, and that only delights the ear, but neither feeds nor clothes the body; of such little use and profit are men, speaking with tongues destitute of the grace of love, either to themselves or others.

Ver. 2. *And though I have the gift of prophecy*, etc.] Either of foretelling future events, as Balaam, who foretold many things concerning the Messiah and the people of Israel, and yet had no true love for either; and Caiaphas, who was high priest the year Christ suffered, and prophesied of his death, and was himself concerned in it, being a bitter enemy to him; or of explaining the prophecies of the Old Testament, by virtue of an extraordinary gift which some persons had; or of the ordinary preaching of the word, which is sometimes expressed by prophesying, which gift some have had, and yet not the grace of God; (see ^{<015>}Philippians 1:15,16 ^{<022>}Matthew 7:22)

and understand all mysteries; either the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the mysterious doctrines of the Gospel; such as the trinity of persons in the Godhead, the incarnation of Christ, the unity of the two natures, human and divine, in him, eternal predestination, the doctrines of regeneration, justification, satisfaction, and the resurrection of the dead; all which a man may have a speculative understanding of, and be without love to God or Christ, or to his people: or else the mystical sense of the types, figures, and shadows of the old law; as the meaning of the passover, brazen serpent, and the rock in the wilderness, the tabernacle, temple, sacrifices, and all things appertaining thereunto. The Jews give us an instance ^{f265} of one who was no lover of Christ, and lived in the times of the apostle; R. Jochanan ben Zaccai, of whom they boast, and who they say was the least of the disciples of Hillell, and yet

“perfectly understood the Scripture, the Misna, the Gemara, the traditions, the allegorical interpretations, the niceties of the law, and the subtleties of the Scribes, the lighter and weightier matters of the law (or the arguments from the greater to the lesser, and “vice versa”), the arguments taken from a parity of reason, the revolution of the sun and moon, rules of interpretation by gematry, parables, etc.”

The apostle proceeds,

and all knowledge; of things natural, as Solomon had; of the heavens, and the stars thereof, of the earth and sea, and all things therein, and appertaining thereunto; of all languages, arts, and sciences; of things divine, as a speculative knowledge of God, and the perfections of his nature, of Christ, his person and offices, of the Gospel, and the doctrines of it:

and though I have all faith; not true, special, saving faith, or that faith in Christ, which has salvation connected with it; for a man cannot have that, and be nothing; such an one shall be certainly saved; and besides, this cannot be without love, and therefore not to be supposed: but all historical faith, an assent to everything that is true, to all that is contained in the Scriptures, whether natural, civil, moral, or evangelical; to all that is contained in the law, or in the Gospel; that faith which believes everything: so the Jews ^{f266} say, what is faith? that in which is found *atwnmyhm l k*, “all faith”; or rather the faith of miracles is meant, both of believing and doing all sorts of miracles, one of which is mentioned;

so that I could remove mountains; meaning either literally, a power of removing mountains from one place to another, referring to (^{f267}Matthew 17:20) so Gregory of Neocaesarea, called “Thaumaturgus”, the wonder worker, from the miracles done by him, is said ^{f267} to remove a mountain, to make more room for building a church; but whether fact, is a question; or this may be understood figuratively, (see ^{f268}Revelation 8:8) for doing things very difficult and wonderful, and almost incredible. The Jews used to call their learned and profound doctors, such as could solve difficulties, and do wondrous things, by the name of mountains, or removers of mountains; thus ^{f268}

“they called Rab Joseph, “Sinai”, because he was very expert in the Talmudic doctrines, and Rabbah bar Nachmani, **μyṛh ṛq̄w**], “a rooter up of mountains”; because he was exceeding acute in subtle disputations.”

Says Rabba ^{f269} to his disciples,

“lo, I am ready to return an answer smartly to everyone that shall ask me, as Ben Azzai, who expounded in the streets of Tiberias; and there was not in his days such a **μyṛh ṛq̄w**], “rooter up of mountains”, as he.”

Again ^{f270},

“Ula saw Resh Lekish in the school, as if **μyṛh ṛq̄w**], “he was rooting up the mountains”, and grinding them together; says Rabenu, does not everybody see R. Meir in the school, as if he was “rooting up the mountains of mountains”, and grinding them together?”

They ^{f271} elsewhere dispute which is the most honourable to be called, “Sinai” or a remover of mountains;

“one says “Sinai” is the more excellent name; another says “the rooter up of mountains” is the more excellent; Rab Joseph is Sinai, and Rabbah the remover of mountains;”

the gloss says the former is so called,

“because the Misnic laws and their explications were ordered by him, as if they had been given on Mount Sinai,”

though he was not so acute as Rabbah; and the latter was called the rooter up of mountains, because

“he was sharp and subtle in the law;”

once more on those words relating to Issachar, (^{f272}Genesis 49:15) “and bowed his shoulder to bear”, it is observed^{f272}; that

“this intimates that he was wise in wisdom, **μῦρῆ ἰσραὴλ**, “a breaker of the mountains”, a shatterer in pieces of the rocks of dissensions and division various ways; as it is said, (^{f273}Jeremiah 23:29) “is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” So a wise man, by the sharpness of his wit, breaks the mountains of difficulties, and divides them by the words of his mouth: hence they used to call the wise men by the names of Sinai, and a rooter of mountains; because they beat and brake the rocks in pieces, the traditions that are difficult and deep.”

The phrase is also used of removing difficulties in a civil and political sense, as well as in a theological one^{f273}; but let a man be able to do ever such great things, yet if he has not “charity”, love to God, to Christ and to his people, he is nothing at all; as the apostle says of himself, supposing it was his own case,

I am nothing; not nothing as a man, nor nothing as a gifted man, still he would be a man, and a man of gifts; nor does the apostle say, that his gifts were nothing, that the gift of prophecy was nothing, or the gift of understanding mysteries nothing, or the gift of knowledge nothing, or the gift of doing miracles nothing, for these are all something, and very great things too, and yet a man in whom the grace of love is wanting, is nothing himself with all these; he is nothing in the account of God, of no esteem with him; he is nothing as a believer in Christ, nor nothing as a Christian. This is also a Jewish way of speaking; for they say^{f274},

“as a bride that is to be adorned with four and twenty ornaments, if she wants anyone of them, **μὴ ἔστιν ἡ νύμφη**, “she is nothing”; so a disciple of a wise man ought to be used to the twenty four books (of the Scripture), and if he is wanting in one of them, **μὴ ἔστιν ὁ μαθητὴς**, “he is nothing”.”

Ver. 3. *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor*, etc.] Of which the Jews give us instances; they say ^{f275}, that R. Ishcab stood, $\mu\upsilon\upsilon\eta\eta$ [$\text{I wyskn I k qyl j hw}$, “and distributed all his goods to the poor”; and a little after they say the same of King Monbaz, that he stood and gave away, or dispersed, “all his goods to the poor”; and elsewhere ^{f276} they say of R. Eliezer ben Judah, that the collectors of alms ran away from him, because he would have given them $\text{wl } \zeta\gamma\zeta \text{ hm I k}$, “all that he had”; and of another, they say ^{f277}, that he took all that he had in his house, and went out to divide it among the poor; but of what avail was all this, when what these men did, they did not from a principle of love to God, nor to Christ, nor even to the poor, to whom they gave their substance; but to have honour and applause from men, and have and obtain eternal life hereafter? for they thought by so doing, that they deserved to behold the face of God, enjoy his favour, and be partakers of the happiness of the world to come ^{f278}:

and though I give my body to be burned; which may be done by a man that has no principle of grace in him; the very Heathens have done it; as the Indian queens upon the decease and funeral of their husbands; and Calenus, an Indian philosopher, who followed Alexander the great, and erected a funeral pile, and went into it of his own accord; and Peregrinus, another philosopher, did the like in the times of Trajan. The apostle here respects martyrdom, and by a prophetic spirit has respect to future times, when burning men’s bodies for religion would be in use, which then was not; and suggests that there might be some, as according to ecclesiastical history there seems to have been some, who, from a forward and misguided zeal, and to get themselves a name, and leave one behind them, have exposed themselves to the flames, and yet “have not” had “charity”, true love to God, a real affection for Christ, or to his saints: wherefore the apostle hypothetically says, supposing himself to be the person that had done all this, it profiteth me nothing: such things may profit others, but not a man’s self; giving all his goods to the poor may be of advantage to them, and giving his body to be burned in the cause of religion may be of service to others, to confirm their faith, and encourage them to like sufferings when called to them; but can be of no avail to themselves in the business of salvation; which is not procured by works of righteousness, even the best, and much less by such which proceed from wrong principles, and are directed to wrong ends; the grace of God being wanting, and particularly that of love.

Ver. 4. *Charity suffereth long*, etc.] The apostle, in this and some following verses, enumerates the several properties and characters of the grace of love; and all along represents it as if it was a person, and no doubt designs one who is possessed of it, and in whose heart it is implanted and reigns; such an one is said to “suffer long”, or be “patient”, as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read; not only under afflictions by the hand of God, which such an one considers as arising from love; but under the reproaches and persecutions of men, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, and in imitation of him; such a person is slow to anger when abused, not quick of resentment, nor hasty to revenge when affronted; but exercises forbearance, suffers long, and bears much, and is ready to forgive:

and is kind; liberal, and bountiful, does good to all men, even to enemies, and especially to the household of faith; he is gentle to all men, affable and courteous to his brethren, and not morose, churlish, and ill natured; he is easy and yielding to the tempers and humours of men; accommodates himself to their infirmities, capacities, manners, and circumstances, in everything he can, that is not contrary to the glory of God, the interest of Christ, the honour of religion, his own conscience, and the good of men;

charity envieth not; or he that has the grace of love to God, Christ, and the saints, does not envy the temporal happiness of others, though it is what he has not, or is greater than he enjoys; as Rachel envied her sister, because she had children when she herself had none; as Joseph’s brethren envied him because he had a greater share in his father’s affections than they had; or as good men may be tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, when they themselves are in adversity; but this grace, when in exercise, will not suffer a person to do: nor will such an one envy the superior measures of grace, the more excellent spiritual gifts, or the greater degree of usefulness, and of success in any spiritual undertaking, and so of greater honour and respect, in any of the saints and servants of Christ to themselves, of which Moses and John the Baptist are remarkable instances, (^{GEN}Numbers 11:28,29 ^{JOH}John 3:27-31),

charity vaunteth not itself, is not ostentatious, a proud boaster; either of what he has, the things of nature, as wisdom, riches, honour, strength, etc. or spiritual gifts; or of what he does, since what such an one does, he does from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God, and not to be seen of men, or to gain their esteem and applause: or is not rash, and precipitant; does not run headlong into measures, to promote his own

honour and interest, without considering what will be the consequence of things; nor is he rash with his mouth, or hasty with his lips, to utter anything unbecoming before God or men. The Arabic version renders it, “does not speak deceitfully”; or hypocritically, for nothing is more contrary to true genuine love than this; the Syriac version renders it, “is not tumultuous”; noisy and seditious: such an one is not troublesome in a commonwealth, nor does he go into parties and factions in churches, but is all the reverse:

is not puffed up swelled with pride, and elated with a vain conceit of himself, of his parts and abilities, of his learning, eloquence, wisdom, and knowledge, as the false teachers in this church were; knowledge without grace, unsanctified knowledge, mere notional speculative knowledge, puffeth up; but charity, or the grace of love, does not; that edifies and preserves persons from being puffed up with themselves, or one against another.

Ver. 5. *Doth not behave itself unseemly*, etc.] By using either unbecoming words, or doing indecent actions; for a man unprincipled with this grace will be careful that no filthy and corrupt communication proceed out of his mouth, which may offend pious ears; and that he uses no ridiculous and ludicrous gestures, which may expose himself and grieve the saints; accordingly the Syriac version renders it, “neither does it commit that which is shameful”: such an one will not do a little mean despicable action, in reproaching one, or flattering another, in order to gain a point, to procure some worldly advantage, or an interest in the friendship and affection of another. Some understand it in this sense, that one endued with this grace thinks nothing unseemly and unbecoming him, however mean it may appear, in which he can be serviceable to men, and promote the honour of religion and interest of Christ; though it be by making coats and garments for the poor, as Dorcas did; or by washing the feet of the saints, in imitation of his Lord and master: or “is not ambitious”, as the Vulgate Latin version reads; of honour and applause, and of being in the highest form, but is lowly, meek and humble:

seeketh not her own things: even those which are “lawful”, as the Arabic version renders it; but seeks the things of God, and what will make most for his honour and glory; and the things of Christ, and what relate to the spread of his Gospel, and the enlargement of his kingdom; and also the things of other men, the temporal and spiritual welfare of the saints: such

look not only on their own things, and are concerned for them, but also upon the things of others, which they likewise care for:

is not easily provoked: to wrath, but gives place to it: such an one is provoked at sin, at immorality and idolatry, as Paul's spirit was stirred up or provoked, when he saw the superstition of the city of Athens; and is easily provoked to love and good works, which are entirely agreeable to the nature of charity:

thinketh no evil; not but that evil thoughts are in such a man's heart, for none are without them; though they are hateful, abominable, and grieving to such as are partakers of the grace of God, who long to be delivered from them: but the meaning is, either that one possessed of this grace of love does not think of the evil that is done him by another; he forgives, as God has forgiven him, so as to forget the injury done him, and remembers it no more; and so the Arabic version reads it, "and remembers not evil"; having once forgiven it, he thinks of it no more; or he does not meditate revenge, or devise mischief, and contrive evil against man that has done evil to him, as Esau did against his brother Jacob; so the Ethiopic version, by way of explanation, adds, "neither thinks evil, nor consults evil"; or as the word here used will bear to be rendered, "does not impute evil"; reckon or place it to the account of him that has committed it against him, but freely and fully forgives, as God, when he forgives sin, is said not to impute it; or such an one is not suspicious of evil in others, he does not indulge evil surmises, and groundless jealousies; which to do is very contrary to this grace of love.

Ver. 6. *Rejoiceth not in iniquity*, etc.] Neither in his own, nor in others; but on the contrary is grieved for it; he mourns over his own iniquities, the corruption of his heart, the infirmities of his life, his secret sins, which none know but God and his own soul; he is greatly troubled at the profaneness and immorality of the men of the world, and the sins of professors cut him to the heart: nor does he rejoice in injustice, as the word used here may be rendered, in any unjust action or injury, that may be done to any, yea, even to an enemy; even as Christ, when Peter, in great zeal for him, drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the high priest's servants, who was more busy than the rest in apprehending Christ, and showed more malignancy than others, was so far from rejoicing at it, that he was displeased with Peter for doing it, and was moved with so much compassion to that man, though his enemy, as to heal him: but rejoiceth in

the truth; in the truth of the Gospel, and the success of it; such an one can do nothing against it, but for it, will buy it at any rate, but sell it upon no account whatever; and he rejoices greatly when he sees any walking in it, and agreeably to it; for truth, as it stands opposed to iniquity or unrighteousness, may signify an upright, holy, and righteous conversation, a conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ, which that teaches, and by which it is adorned; now a gracious soul desires this in itself, and delights to see it in others.

Ver. 7. *Beareth all things*, etc.] The burdens of fellow Christians, and so fulfils the law of Christ, which is the law of love; the infirmities of weak believers, and the reproaches and persecutions of the world: or “covers all things”, as it may be rendered, even a multitude of sins, as charity is said to do, (~~1~~ 1 Peter 4:8) not by conniving at them, or suffering them to be upon a brother; but having privately and faithfully reproved for them, and the offender being brought to a sense and acknowledgment of them, he freely forgives them as trespasses against him, covers them with the mantle of love, and industriously hides and conceals them from others;

believeth all things; that are to be believed, all that God says in his word, all his truths, and all his promises; and even sometimes in hope against hope, as Abraham did, relying upon the power, faithfulness, and other perfections of God; though such a man will not believe every spirit, every preacher and teacher, nor any but such as agree with the Scriptures of truth, the standard of faith and practice; nor will he believe every word of man, which is the character of a weak and foolish man; indeed, a man of charity or love is willing to believe all the good things reported of men; he is very credulous of such things, and is unwilling to believe ill reports of persons, or any ill of men; unless it is open and glaring, and is well supported, and there is full evidence of it; he is very incredulous in this respect:

hopes all things; that are to be hoped for; hopes for the accomplishment of all the promises of God; hopes for the enjoyment of him in his house and ordinances; hopes for things that are not seen, that are future, difficult, though possible to be enjoyed: hopes for heaven and eternal happiness, for more grace here and glory hereafter; hopes the best of all men, of all professors of religion, even of wicked men, that they may be better and brought to repentance, and of fallen professors, who declare their

repentance, and make their acknowledgments; he hopes well of them, that they are sincere, and all is right and will appear so:

endureth all things; that are disagreeable to the flesh; all afflictions, tribulations, temptations, persecutions, and death itself, for the elect's sake, for the sake of the Gospel, and especially for the sake of Christ Jesus.

Ver. 8. *Charity never faileth*, etc.] It may fail as to the exercise of it, as other graces do; it may be left, but not lost; the fervour of it may be remitted and abated; it may wax cold through the prevalence of sin; it may be greatly damped by the growth of error and heresy, which eat as do a canker; and may be much obstructed by an anxious and immoderate care and concern for worldly things; which are very pernicious to all the branches of vital religion and powerful godliness, and particularly love to God, Christ, and the brethren: but this grace never fails as to its principle; it is an immortal and an incorruptible seed; it lives throughout the most violent temptations, as in Peter; and under the greatest desertions and sorest afflictions, still there is an affection for God; Christ is he whom such a soul loves; and the saints are the excellent in the earth, in whom is all his delight: and it also continues as to its use, and will do so, when faith and hope will loose theirs, even in the other world; for faith will be changed into vision, and hope into enjoyment; but love will be the same, only act in a higher sphere, and to a greater degree, and in a perfect manner:

but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; by which are meant, either the predictions of future events, not that they shall fail in their accomplishment, but they shall be no more, because they will all be accomplished; or else the gifts of explaining the prophecies of the Old Testament, and of preaching the doctrines of the Gospel, will be no more, because there will be no need of them in a state of perfection:

whether there be tongues they shall cease; not but that, in the resurrection, that member of the body, the tongue, will be restored as the rest, and be everlastingly employed in celebrating the perfections of God, in singing the hallelujahs of the Lamb, and in joining with angels and other saints in songs of praise to the eternal Three; but the gift of speaking with divers tongues will cease, indeed it has already; nor will there be any use for such an extraordinary gift in the other world; when probably, and as it is thought by some, there will be but one language, and that the Hebrew language; as the whole earth was of one language and speech before the confusion at Babel:

whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away; that is, the word of knowledge, peculiarly given by the spirit to some persons only; or that peculiar gift of knowledge of divine things, by which some are qualified to be instructors of others; the present means both of communicating, and of obtaining and increasing knowledge by the preaching and hearing of the word, will be no more used: and besides, imperfect knowledge of every sort will disappear, it will become perfect; that knowledge which is in part will be done away, when perfect knowledge takes place; for so we are taught to explain it by the following words.

Ver. 9. *For we know in part*, etc.] Not that the Scriptures, the rule and measure of knowledge, and from whence spiritual knowledge is derived, are imperfect; so that there is need of unwritten traditions, and of enthusiastic revelations and inspirations, to inform of things otherwise unknown; for though they were at sundry times, and in divers manners delivered, yet now they contain a complete system of divine truths, to which nothing is to be added, and from which nothing is to be taken away; or that only a part of the saints know the things of God; for though there is a difference between them, some have more knowledge than others, yet all have some, all are taught of God, and know him, and have that anointing which teacheth all things; wherefore the sense also is not, that only a part of truth, and not the whole, is known; for the Spirit of God leads into all truth; the whole counsel of God is made known in the Scriptures, and by the ministers of the word; though, to this sense the Arabic version inclines, rendering it, “some part of doctrine we know”; and so in (~~4632~~ 1 Corinthians 13:12) “some part of knowledge I know”; as also the Syriac version, which renders it *l yl q ygs ʿm*, “a little from much we know”; but the true meaning is, that though the rule of knowledge is perfect, and all the saints have knowledge, and every truth of the Gospel is known; yet by those that know most, it is known but imperfectly: the truth itself may be most clearly discerned, as it is revealed in the word; yet the manner of it, how it is, may not be known; and many difficulties may attend it, and objections be raised to it, which are not easily solved; as in the doctrines of the Trinity, predestination, the union of the two natures in Christ, the resurrection of the dead, etc.

and we prophesy in part; the word of prophecy, as it sure, it is also perfect, to which we do well to take heed; and though all do not prophesy, yet all that do, and that prophesy aright, that is, explain the word of God aright, these preach the Gospel fully, declare the whole counsel of God, and keep

back nothing profit able to the saints; yet still their prophesying or explaining the prophecies of the Old Testament, or the mysteries of the Gospel, is but imperfect at best in the present state of things.

Ver. 10. *But when that which is perfect is come*, etc.] When perfect knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven shall take place; which will not in this life, but in that which is to come. So the Jews say^{f279} that at the resurrection, upon the reunion of the soul and body,

“the children of men shall attain to *hmyl ç h[d*, “perfect knowledge”;

which is what the apostle refers to here:

and then that which is in part, shall be done away: the imperfection of knowledge shall be removed; the imperfect manner of communicating knowledge, and of receiving and acquiring it, will cease: thus the apostle explains what he means by the cessation and failing of knowledge, and prophecy; not that knowledge itself will be no more, and a state of ignorance and darkness succeed; but imperfect knowledge will vanish away, or rather will be perfected, or be swallowed up in perfect knowledge; the imperfection of it will disappear; and it will be no more taught and received in part; the whole of truth will be clearly known.

Ver. 11. *When I was a child I spake as a child*, etc.] That cannot speak plain, aims at words rather than expresses them, delivers them in a lisping or stammering manner: hereby the apostle illustrates the then present gift of speaking with divers tongues, which was an extraordinary gift of the Spirit, was peculiar to some persons, and what many were very fond of; and yet this, in its highest degree and exercise, was but like the lisping of a child, in comparison of what will be known and expressed by saints, when they come to be perfect men in heaven:

I understood as a child; and so does he that understands all mysteries, in comparison of the enlightened and enlarged understandings of glorified saints; the people of God, who are in the highest form and class of understanding, in the present state of things, are but children in understanding; it is in the other world, when they are arrived to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, that they will in understanding be men:

I thought, or “reasoned”,

as a child; whose thoughts are low and mean, and reasonings very weak; and so are the thoughts and reasonings of such as have all knowledge here below, in comparison of that perfect knowledge, those clear ideas, and strong reasonings of the spirits of just men above:

but when I became a man, I put away childish things; childish talk, childish affections, and childish thoughts and reasonings; so when the saints shall be grown to the full age of Christ, and are become perfect men in him, tongues shall cease, prophecies shall fail, and knowledge vanish away; and in the room thereof, such conversation, understanding, and knowledge take place, as will be entirely suited to the manly state in glory.

Ver. 12. *For now we see through a glass*, etc.] In this present life, they that are enlightened by the Spirit of God, see God, the perfections and glory of his nature, the riches of his grace and goodness, as displayed in Christ; they behold the glory of Christ, as full of grace and truth, and are filled with love to him; the desires of their souls are after him, and they are changed into the same image by his Spirit; they discern the things of the Spirit of God; the veil being removed from them, they behold wondrous things, out of the law of God and Gospel of Christ, even such things as are unseen unto, and unknown by the natural man: but then it is all “through a glass”; not of the creatures; for though the invisible things of God may in some sort be seen and understood by the things that are made; and God, as the God of nature, may be seen in the works of creation and providence, yet not as the God of grace; it is only in his Son, and through the glass of the Gospel, he is to be beheld in this light: and so it is through the glass of the word and ordinances, that the glory of the person of Christ, of his offices, fulness of grace and righteousness, is only to be seen; in these he is evidently set forth to the eye of faith, as the surety, Saviour, and Redeemer of his people, and through these the knowledge of divine truths is communicated: and through all these but

darkly: “in an enigma”, or “riddle”, or “dark saying”, as the word here used may be rendered; that is, in this present state, in comparison of the future one; for though the sight of things under the Gospel dispensation is clear, and with open face, in comparison of the legal one, yet even this is very obscure, and attended with great darkness and imperfection, when compared with the beatific vision in heaven, which will have no manner of interruption and obscurity in it:

but then face to face: there will be no intervening mediums of vision; not the glass of the word and ordinances; there will be no need of them, God and Christ will be seen as they are; the judgments of God, his providential dispensations, will be all made manifest, and will be legible without the help of a glass; the doctrines of grace and truth will lie open and clear, free of all dark speeches, obscure hints, or enigmatical expressions: and as there will be nothing to intervene by way of assistance, there being no need of any, there will be nothing to intercept the sight; the objects will be nigh, even face to face; the view will be full and clear, the sight will be perfect, as well as the converse with the objects will be familiar; and which, without the least obstruction, will always so continue: there seems to be here a double reference, partly to what the Lord says of Moses, in (^{f280}Numbers 12:8) “with him will I speak, mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches”; and partly to what the Jews say of him, with a view to the same passage:

“all the prophets (say they ^{f280}) looked through a glass, which did not give light; (or, as they sometimes say, which was spotted, and was not clear;) Moses our master looked **hryamh ayrl qpsyab**, “through a glass that gave light;”

or, as elsewhere, was bright and clear, and without any spot. Again, they say ^{f281},

“all the prophets prophesied by the means of an angel; hence they saw what they saw **hdyj w l çmb**, “by way of parable and riddle”, or dark saying; Moses our master did not prophesy by the means of an angel; as it is said, “with him will I speak mouth to mouth”; and it is said, “the Lord spake to Moses, face to face”; and it is also said, “the similitude of the Lord shall he behold”; as if it was said, that there should be no parable; but he should see the thing clearly without a parable; of which likewise the law testifies, saying, “apparently, and not in dark speeches”; for he did not prophesy **hdyj b**, “by way of riddle”; (in an enigmatical way, darkly;) but apparently, for he saw the matter clearly.”

The two glasses, clear and not clear, the Cabalistic doctors call “tiphereth” and “malchuth” ^{f282}.

““Tiphereth” (they say) is a clear and well polished glass, by which Moses prophesied and had visions, “and saw all things most

exactly”, in a very singular manner; “malchuth” is the glass that is not clear; so that he that prophesies by that, prophesies “by riddle”, and parable.”

Now the apostle suggests, that as there was such a difference between Moses and the rest of the prophets, the one saw clearly, the other through a glass darkly; a like, yea, a much greater difference there is between the clearest views saints have of divine things now, and those they shall be blessed with hereafter, and which he exemplifies in himself:

now I know in part; though not a whit behind the chief of the apostles; though his knowledge in the mystery of Christ was such, as had not been given to any in ages and generations past; and though he had been caught up into the third heaven and had heard words not lawful to be uttered, yet owns his knowledge in the present state to be but imperfect; which may be instructive to such, who are apt to entertain an high opinion of themselves, and dream of perfection in this life:

but then shall I know, even as I am known; in the other world and state, he signifies that he should know God, Christ, angels, and glorified saints, and all truths in a perfect manner, even as he was known of God and Christ perfectly, allowing for the difference between the Creator and the creature; his sense is, that he should have as full and complete a knowledge of persons and things as he was capable of; it would be like, though not equal to, the knowledge which God had of him; and which would be attended with the strongest love and affection to the objects known, even as he was known and loved of God.

Ver. 13. *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three*, etc.] Which are the principal graces of the Spirit of God: faith is to be understood, not of a faith of miracles, for that does not abide; nor of an historical one, or mere assent to truth; persons may have this faith, and believe but for a while; but of that faith, which is peculiar to God’s elect; is a fruit and effect of electing grace, and for that reason abides; is the gift of God, and one of those which are without repentance; is the work of God, and the operation of his Spirit, and therefore will be performed with power; it is the grace by which a soul sees Christ, goes unto him, lays hold on him, receives him, relies on him, and lives upon him: “hope” is also a gift of God’s grace, implanted in regeneration; has God and Christ, and not any worldly thing, or outward performance, for its object, ground, and foundation, to build upon; it is of things unseen, future, difficult, yet possible to be enjoyed; it is

supported by the love of God, is encouraged by promises, and is sure, being fixed on Christ and his righteousness; it is that grace by which saints wait for things promised, and rejoice in the believing views of glory and happiness: charity designs love to God, Christ, and the saints, as has been explained, and a large account is given of it in this chapter: these are the three chief and leading graces in God's people, and they abide and continue with them; they may fail sometimes, as to their lively exercise, but never as to their being and principle; faith may droop and hang its wing, hope may not be lively, and love may wax cold, but neither of them can be lost; Christ prays that faith fail not, hope on him is an anchor sure and steadfast, and nothing can separate from the love of Christ; as not from the love of Christ to his people, so not from theirs to him: these graces abide now, during the present life: he that has true faith in Christ, shall die in it; and he that has a good hope through grace, shall have it in his death; and love will outlive death, and be in its height and glory in the other world: for which reason it is added,

but the greatest of these is charity; and is said to be so, not that it is on every account the greatest; faith in many things exceeds that, as what is ascribed to it in Scripture shows; but because of the peculiar properties and effects of it before mentioned, it including faith and hope, as in (~~4130~~¹ Corinthians 13:7) and besides many other things, and because, without this, faith and hope are nothing: and besides, its usefulness is more extensive than either of the other two; a man's faith is only for himself; a just man lives by his own faith, and not another's; one man's faith will be of no service to another, and the same is true of hope; but by love saints serve one another, both in things temporal and spiritual, and chiefly it is said to be the greatest, because most durable; in the other world, faith will be changed for vision, and hope for enjoyment, but love will abide, and be in its full perfection and constant exercise, to all eternity. The Jews ^{f283} say much the same of humility the apostle does here of charity;

“wisdom, fear, humility, they are alike, [^]l wkm hl wdg hwn[Æa,
“but humility is greater than them all”.”