

ON THE DOCTRINE OF
CHARITY,
AND
ON THE DOCTRINE OF
FAITH.

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ON THE DOCTRINE OF CHARITY.

IN offering some observations on the doctrine of charity, it is first to be observed, what ought to be deeply regretted, that even the grammatical meaning of the word "charity" is a thing which very few at the present day attend to. In common usage charity means nothing more than alms-giving, and, when speaking in praise of any one, we say, "he is a very charitable man," we mean that he gives a good deal to the poor. Now alms-giving, or the practice of giving assistance, when exercised with discrimination so as to be productive of real benefit to the truly deserving, is certainly one of the forms in which charity discovers its influence; but it is not charity itself. This is perfectly clear from the declaration of the Apostle Paul, when he says, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,—and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."* The word "charity" is introduced into our language from the Latin, in which it means the affection which exists between parties that are mutually dear to each other; but a considerable ambiguity arises from the use of the word in English, because we have another word which conveys the same idea,—that is, "love" However, we have a sure means for ascertaining what the word "charity"

*1 Cor. xiii.3

properly means, at least in the signification it bears in the Scriptures, which is all that we have to do with. There is only one noun used throughout the New Testament to signify *love*: and this, in our English version, is sometimes translated “love,” and sometimes “charity.” Thus, when the Lord says, “Greater *love* hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend,”* and when Paul says, “*Love* is the fulfilling of the law,”† the word is the same as when the Apostle says, again, “*Charity* suffereth long and is kind.”‡ Not to waste then any more words on a point of this sort, none who make any inquiry can doubt, that the word “charity,” whenever it is mentioned in the Scriptures, means *love*. And this is what the Lord mentions as the characteristic of his followers. “A new commandment I give unto yous that ye love one another: by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have *love* one to another.”§ The meaning would have been the same if our translation had given it, “if ye have *charity* one to another.”—If then charity be the same thing as love, we see that it is a principle reigning in the mind, not a mere outward action: it is the disposition of kindness and benevolence, not the act of alms-giving without such disposition; which may be often separated from it, and exercised from mere ostentation or the desire of applause.

Charity then is *love*. But what is Christian charity? for love to our kindred, and those who promote our advantage, may and does exist where there is no religion at all. Our Lord has taught us then what this is, in his answer to the lawyer. “For a lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with

* John xv. 13.

† Rom. xiii. 10.
‡ John xiii. 34, 35.

§ 1 Cor. xiii.