

- 1 John i. 9. repenting of their sin, and confessing it, are assured that *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*. Believers oppressed by the weariness of the way, and their own instability, are reminded that *The Lord is faithful, Who shall stablish you, and guard you from the evil one*. We are encouraged to aspire to perfect holiness of body and soul and spirit, are assured that *faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it*. These passages carry the Divine fidelity into the entire process of personal salvation from beginning to end. It is remarkable that this attribute is never expressly connected with the fulfilment of the Divine threatenings, though equally applicable to them. Hence, though we have located it in the family of Righteousness or justice, it forms the transition to the other and more gracious family of Love.

Love.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

Like His holiness, the love of God has its most direct and express relation to the creature, and especially to the intelligences under the moral government of God. But love has in this the pre-eminence, that it has an eternal and essential seat in the Triune Essence.

- In the Divine Essence. 1 John iv. 16. 1. Hence we read that GOD IS LOVE: in the secret of the Divine Self-sufficiency and Blessedness we have already seen the mysterious intercommunion of Three Persons whose mutual love gives God one of His Names and defines His nature. If in the created universe it for ever seeks to impart itself to all who are capable of receiving it, and delights both in giving and receiving, that is because in the ever-blessed Trinity love is, as in all who reflect the Divine image, the *bond of perfectness*. We may, we must, transfer our finite feeling to the Infinite, and believe, not that the Triune God was, but that He is, existing in an eternal sphere of love, into the fellowship of which the finite and creaturely universe is received. *Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world*: if these words are connected with those which immediately precede, *and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me*; and these again with the assurance, *as the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you*; and these once more with the command, *That ye love one another*,
- Col iii. 14. John xvii. 23, 24. John xv. 9. John xiii. 34.

as I have loved you, it will appear how perfect is the identity in kind between finite and infinite love, between the reflection among us and the reality in the essential Trinity, and how profound is the meaning of those words, *Love is of God*: ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστίν, a form of expression used of no other grace. The Son is ever—not was, ὁ ὢν—in the bosom of the Father: in the unity of the Holy Ghost one Spirit with the Father even as *he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit* with Him. Thus we may boldly repeat that more glorious things are spoken of the Divine perfection of Love than of any other. It is not said that God is holiness: for, in His eternal Triune Essence, there is no room, there is no reason, for the attribute that sets up the standard of good and eternally repels evil. As soon as we think of holiness we think of the creature on the way from evil to good, or on the way from perfection to still higher perfection. But GOD IS LOVE; and this attribute, which is both nature and attribute, forms the link between the absolute Godhead and the manifestations of God to His intelligent creatures. The Divine holiness springs, as it were, out of His perfection to meet the creature; and is in a most important sense created with it. But love is of God, and is in the Divine relation to the universe only a hidden mystery revealed.

1 John iv
7.

Johni. 18.

1 Cor. vi.
17.

1 John iv.
8, 16.

2. The love of God rested upon the world also from its foundation: upon every intelligent creature as the love that communicates itself and takes complacency in its object. But the book of revelation, which is the record of the Divine dealings with a redeemed race,—redeemed in the very act of its fall,—reserves the attribute for redemption. It does not indeed speak of it familiarly, scarcely speaks of it at all, until its last expression in Christ is ready. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins.* This sentiment or feeling in God, originating and directing the economy of redemption, was not fully revealed until the Lord Himself revealed it. And, when revealed, it is reserved for one service: to preside over the Cross and the Recovery of mankind. No record or register of the Divine perfections, related to the created universe as such, contains that of love. His goodness and His loving-kindness are often alluded to as the nearest approach to the attribute that is never turned towards any but the objects of redemption.

Reserved
for Re-
demption.

1 John 1v
10.

ing love. But at length the set time came for the new revelation, or at least the fuller revelation, of the attribute that governs all the rest: that which, to adopt St. James's word, is the νόμος βασιλικός, the *royal law* in God as in man. But love when it is revealed takes many names, or rather is the mother of a new and blessed family of attributes.

3. But, whatever other manifestations love may take, or whatever other name it may bear, it is the moral attribute in God which is His most blessed gift to the individual soul: in the administration of the Holy Ghost it is the bond between God and the redeemed, as it were their common ethical principle. We are said to be made *partakers of the Divine nature* generally, and with special reference to the two great moral attributes of holiness and love. We are *partakers of His holiness* as being purified from sin and sanctified to His service. But a stronger word is used about our participation of His love. St. John points our thought to the invisible essence of God, *No man hath seen God at any time*, but only that he may tell us in what sense we become one with the Invisible: *If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and His love is fulfilled in us*. Soon afterwards he utters the profoundest word the Bible contains as to the relations and privilege of the saints: *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*. It may be added here in conclusion that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is the real bond of fellowship between God and the believer: *He that is joined unto the Lord is One Spirit*. Our partaking of the Divine holiness is the *sanctification of the Spirit*; and our partaking of the Divine love is explained to be *because He hath given us of His Spirit*.

Grace.

GRACE AND ITS RELATED ATTRIBUTES.

What the righteousness is to the holiness of God, that His *grace* is to His love: the firstborn of its strength and its minister in the things pertaining to salvation. Love retains its distinction to define both the nature and the attribute. The supreme principle or feeling, governing the Divine dealings with sinners, is in the Christian dispensation *grace*.

1. This word is in some respects a creation of the Gospel. God was, in the Old Testament, *a God full of compassion, and gracious*,

Born of the Gospel. Ps. lxxxvi. 15.