

Christianity to

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his faith, kindling his devotion, stirring up his zeal, aiding his realization of unseen things, assuaging his griefs, animating his hopes, augmenting his spiritual joy? But in order to that intercourse among Christians, on which both Scripture and experience prove that their progress in the divine life so much depends, sincere mutual love is necessarily presupposed. No one will open his heart to another, and speak freely about what relates to his eternal interests, if there be the least degree of coldness between them,—if there be not, I should rather say, positive love between them. Either a want of affection on our part to a brother in Christ, or a suspicion in our minds of his want of affection to us, closes our lips, and bars us from every thing deserving the name of Christian communion with that man.

While brotherly love among the members of the church is thus indispensable, in order to their mutually edifying one another, it has a peculiar influence in commending Christianity to the world. Few things tend more to indispense irreligious men for thinking favourably of the Gospel than the want of affection which they observe among Christians. They look at the meetings of public religious bodies, and they perceive that scenes of acrimonious and bitter strife are of frequent occurrence there. They look at the conduct of professing Christians in private life, and they see two individuals, members of the same church, living on terms of rancorous hostility,—seizing every occasion to injure each other by word or deed,—or, if they do not express their hatred in a palpable outward manner, showing by infallible tokens that they have a mutual dislike at heart. What is the consequence? The cause of religion suffers. Ungodly men are furnished with an excuse which, however unsatisfactory in reality, they are at least able plausibly to allege for their neglect of religion. "Christians are no better than ourselves. What should we gain