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### GOD'S LOVE TO MAN THE CAUSE OF MAN'S LOVE TO GOD.

1 JOHN iv. 19 : " *We love Him, because He first loved us*".

The power of love to awaken that feeling in return in cases where there has been previous existing hostility, is well known, and is frequently illustrated. Where, for example, there has been alienation between friends, or hostility between neighbours, if, on the one hand, a sentiment of love grows up, and, notwithstanding the hostility still cherished on the other, prompts to some deed of disinterested and active benevolence, the enmity on the other will most probably be overcome, and the love of the individual won. We have all heard of the monarch pardoning a rebel subject, and of that subject subdued under the effects of royal clemency, the unmerited love of his sovereign, and henceforward won to his cause, and bound by a stronger tie than ever to his throne. But, perhaps the example most familiar to all of the operation of the principle in question, is the love of a parent to a child, and the influence which the strong expressions of that sentiment often exert over even the most wayward and obdurate heart. In a thousand instances is filial ingratitude and disobedience overcome in this very way, and the child who before broke the parent's heart, and was like to bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, brought back to the affections of former years, to the proper sympathies of nature. It may be the child has long resisted the sage counsels of the parent, risen up in opposition to his authority, and hardened himself the more against his

threats, despised his warnings, returned ingratitude and insult for his kindness, been unmelted under his love, and for years has still proved the same unworthy object of the tenderest solicitude, and the fondest regard. But the love which a parent only can feel, and which a parent can never renounce, still faithful and still lavishing its kindness upon its object, and expressing itself, perhaps, in actions to which no other principle and no other affection could prompt, at last obtains the victory, and subdues the heart which had been so long insensible. Have we never ourselves felt the power of the principle in disarming hostility, and awakening our love? Have we never been subdued under the offices and exhibitions of kindness on the part of those whom we had offended, or towards whom we had been cherishing feelings of enmity or hatred? Has their love not won ours?—and do we not love them *because they first loved us*?

This is the principle to whose influence the apostle alludes in the words prefixed, and to which he so shortly and very beautifully gives expression, in referring to the love of God, and the corresponding love in man. "*We love Him, because he first loved us*".

That man is by nature the enemy of God, is at once a doctrine of Scripture, and is corroborated by reason and experience. The children of his hand, the partakers of his love, the subjects of his kingdom—we forgot the God that made us, we cast off his love, and rebelled against his authority. Of the rock that begat us we became unmindful, and forgot the God that formed us. Though he nourished us and brought us up as children, yet we rebelled against him; and