

to say under two heads,—adverting *first* to some reasons why we should love the brethren; and *then* to a few of the ways in which our love to them should be manifested.

I. (1.) Among the reasons why a Christian should love the brethren, the first which I would mention is, that *there is something about every one of them specially worthy of love*. Just as we admire a star for its lustre, and relish a flower for its fragrance, so we ought to esteem Christians for their worth. They are “the excellent of the earth, in whom,” said the Psalmist, “is all my delight.”

The graces of the Holy Spirit, where they shine in any conspicuous manner, produce a beautiful character. Suppose a man to have been made “a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”: suppose that he is “purifying himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God”: let him be one to whom “the works of the flesh—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like”—are detestable; and who is bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance”; the qualities which he possesses must make him an object of complacent and admiring regard to all whose judgments sin has not perverted. Now, such essentially, though imperfectly, are all Christians. They are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.” On this account they deserve to be loved, however deficient they may be in many things that dazzle the world; just as a gem is precious in the eye of a lapidary who discerns its real value, though it may be rough in its exterior, and by no means outwardly brilliant.

The Christian character was manifested in its perfection