

Opposite causes will produce opposite effects. If you desire that a congregation shall flourish—if you desire that the Church as a whole shall be lovely like the rose of Sharon, let the love of Christ dwell richly in each heart; let a meek and humble spirit be the badge of membership; and let the aim of all be to spend and be spent for the sake of their beloved Lord. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity.”\*

IV. This view of the matter is confirmed by the concluding exhortation of our text, “*Live in peace.*” There could be no foundation for such a precept had there been no causes in operation to disturb the peace of the Church. We can conceive it possible indeed that the Church may be still and at rest, not only by means of the removal of all those causes which occasion division, but from an absolute and entire prohibition of thinking on religious matters at all; a prostration of the human intellect before the ascendancy of mental despotism; a surrender of man’s noblest prerogative to the claims of arbitrary power. But such stillness is the stillness of death; such peace is the peace of the grave. The precept of the text is complied with, not when we attempt forcibly to remove out of the way all the real or imaginary causes of disunion; not when we seek to tie up the capacity of man for thinking, and reduce him to a mere machine;—but when in spite of all the sources of varied sentiment and action, we nevertheless cherish forbearance and brotherly love. There is no surrender of principle called for, seeing “the wisdom that is from above is first pure, *then peaceable.*†” There is only a surrender of selfish passion to be made, and a restraint to be put upon our own spirits. The temper of Diotrephes in a Church must necessarily disturb its peace and mar its interests. Such a temper must be subdued, and ministers, office-bearers, and members must become fellow-helpers to the truth. Each Christian society or church acts consistently in adhering

\* 1 Cor. xvi. 13, 14.      † James iii. 17.