

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
OF CHARLESTON;
BEFORE THE
INCORPORATED GRAND LODGE
OF
SOUTH-CAROLINA,
ANCIENT YORK MASONS.

AND THE BRETHREN OF THAT FRATERNITY, ASSEMBLED IN
GENERAL COMMUNICATION, ON THE FESTIVAL OF SAINT
JOHN THE EVANGELIST, DECEMBER 27, 1793.

BY THE REVEREND GEORGE BUIST,
MINISTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF CHARLESTON, AND
CHAPLAIN TO THE GRAND LODGE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE BRETHREN,



CHARLESTON:
PRINTED BY HARRISON AND BOWEN.

M, DCC, XCIV.

1794

TO THE

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL AND HONOURABLE

WILLIAM SMITH, Esq.

GRAND MASTER ELECT;

THE OTHER

GRAND OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

OF THE

INCORPORATED GRAND LODGE OF
SOUTH-CAROLINA, ANCIENT YORK
MASONS, AND ITS MASONIC
JURISDICTION,

THIS SERMON IS WITH RESPECT AND BRO-
THERLY ESTEEM INSCRIBED BY

THEIR AFFECTIONATE BROTHER,

AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

GEORGE BUIST.



*In a general communication of Ancient York Masons,
held at their Grand Lodge Room in Charleston,
on St. John the Evangelist's Day, 1793,*

A Motion was made and unanimously agreed to.

*That a committee, consisting of the grand wardens
and grand secretary, be appointed to wait on the
grand chaplain, to request a copy of his Sermon,
delivered on that day, to be published for a chari-
table purpose.*

Extract from the Minutes,

A. ALEXANDER, Grand Secretary.



OR BENEVOLENCE, &c.
A S E R M O N, &c.

—♦♦♦♦♦—
JOHN, CHAP. XV. VER. 12.

This is my commandment, that YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, as I have loved you.

THE royal law of love, which forms the basis of the Christian character, comprehends two great branches, love to God, and love to man. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* The obligation of the former is so evident and powerful that we immediately conclude him to be altogether destitute of understanding and feeling, whose heart is not warmed with gratitude and does not glow with love to the Almighty Creator and generous Benefactor of mankind. His mind resembles the barren desert where no fair flower has ever opened its blossoms to the sun's

fun's

sun's enlivening rays. This, therefore, is *the first and great commandment* of our nature. *But the second is like unto it*, and is of no less indispensable obligation; being not only deducible from the love of God, but also impressed upon our minds by an inward feeling which teaches us to look with an eye of benevolence on the whole creation of God, but especially on those whom he has beautified with his image, and made partakers of the same nature with ourselves.

BUT though the love of our neighbour is part of the system of nature, and has entered into every code of laws which has been published to the world, it shines forth with due lustre in the gospel alone. It is there revealed with so much greater clearness than it had been in former times; it is there accompanied with such new and powerful motives, that it is justly stiled a *new commandment*, as if it had been unknown before, or were peculiar to the religion of Jesus. I have found no passage of sacred writ, wherein the precept is more clearly expressed than in the words of
the

the text : And there is none which ought to make a deeper impression on the mind, if we duly consider the affecting situation in which it was delivered, or the generous motive employed to enforce it's observance.

JESUS and his small society of friends were now assembled in expectation of that fatal event which was to *smite the shepherd, and to scatter the sheep*. For the last time, he was now to address them : His instructions would therefore be such as he deemed most important and useful ; and his hearers would listen to them with that attention, and obey them with that alacrity, which are due to the discourse and advice of a dying man. In this interesting situation, what language did he hold to his afflicted followers ? “ *This is my commandment* (said he) “ *my peculiar commandment, about* “ *the observance of which I am most anxious,* “ *—My last and dying commandment, which* “ *therefore ought to sink deepest into your* “ *hearts,—My most important commandment,* “ *which will be most useful to you when, by* “ *my departure, you are left as* *sheep without* “ *a*

“ *a Shepherd in the midst of wolves*—THAT YE
 “ LOVE ONE ANOTHER. This is the request of
 “ one who loves you, & who is now about to give
 “ the most convincing proof of his affection, even
 “ to lay down his life for you. I cannot suppose
 “ you so ungrateful as to disregard my command-
 “ ment, or so insensible to every generous senti-
 “ ment as to feel no emotion of love and regard
 “ for him whose life has been dedicated to your
 “ service, and the good of mankind. But all the
 “ return I require for this kindness, is *that ye*
 “ *love another*. Let the regard which you owe
 “ to me be transferred to your brethren; and
 “ whatever affection and kindness you shew unto
 “ them, I will consider as done unto myself.”

AND is it possible, O generous and disinter-
 ested Saviour! that thy commandments are still
 disregarded by those who bear thy name, and
 thy blessed example productive of so little ef-
 fect? Is it possible, while the wild beasts of
 the desert delight to associate with those of their
 kind, while the monsters of prey withhold
 their ravening jaws from their own species,
 that man should become the enemy of man,
 should

should burn with resentment, malice and revenge against his brother, and should go forth in hostile array to exterminate his race?—Yes truly so it is. Though Nature teaches, and the Gospel commands us to *love one another*, how often do we see this noble and expanding principle confined and fettered by the narrow and contracted one of *self love*? Even where men break not out into open violence and discord, how little brotherly love or sincere good will actuates their conduct! What is modern politeness, but selfishness in disguise? What is modern honour, but a refined species of revenge? What avail those phrases of compliment which custom has sanctioned, but to cloak the inward malevolence, or at least indifference of the heart?

In such a situation of things, when there is so little *love without dissimulation*, it is not an unnecessary, however common attempt to *illustrate the nature*, and *inforce the cultivation* of this divine principle.

I. THE *love of our neighbour* is that principle of our nature which leads us to wish well to
all

all mankind, and to do good to as many as are within our reach. It is therefore an inward feeling, and not an outward act; a disposition of soul, and not a qualification of conduct. It is not, however, an useless and inactive principle; on the contrary, it is the foundation of a virtuous character, and is, in truth, *the fulfilling of the law*. For where it exists in full force, it secures a complete discharge of all the social duties. To this principle, however diversified by circumstances and situation, every species of active virtue may be traced. Where it meets with suffering and distress, it shines forth in the exercise of compassion. Where it meets with poverty and want, it appears in works of charity and mercy. When it is called to judge of the actions of others, it decides with candour and impartiality. In cases of insult and injury, love becomes meekness and leads to the forgiveness of wrongs. Where discord and divisions prevail, love cultivates a quiet and peaceable behaviour. When our friends are interested, it performs, with alacrity, the kind offices of friendship.

friendship. When our country is in danger, it shines forth under the name of patriotism and public spirit. To superiors, it shews respect; to equals, kindness and affection; to inferiors, gentleness and condescension.

In like manner, it is an effectual barrier against the commission of sin. If we sincerely love one another, we can be guilty of no manner of injustice, *for love worketh no ill to his neighbour.* In that breast where dwells brotherly love, envy can find no place, for *charity envieth not.* Love is an enemy to all pride and vain-glory, for *charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, and doth not behave itself unseemly.* It stops the mouths of the censorious, for *love thinketh no evil and covereth all sins.* It destroys every spark of covetousness, for *love seeketh not her own.* In short *he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended*

comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

HITHERTO we have spoken only of the principle itself and the mode of its operation; let us now enquire into its object. I am to love my neighbour—but who is my neighbour? This question was formerly proposed to our Lord, by one who imagined that no body was his neighbour but one of the same faith and country with himself. Our Lord's reply, which is contained in one of the most beautiful and affecting histories recorded in any language, plainly shews the fallacy of this idea, gives energy to the voice of nature which vicious customs and prejudices had so long silenced, and teaches us that our love ought not to be confined to our friends and fellow-citizens, from whom we may expect some return, but should embrace, within its ample range, the whole human race, however diversified by nation or colour, government or religion, party or sect. The odious distinctions of nations, countries and religions are abolished by the universal religion of Christianity.—Jew
and

and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, Roman and Scythian, bond and free, are all one in Christ Jesus. According to the doctrines of his religion, all men are brethren and friends. Even our enemies are not the proper objects of our hatred: as men and as Christians we ought to love them. For all who bear the name of Christ have the same common faith, are animated by the same spirit, supported by the same hope, heirs of the same promises, fellow-citizens of the same country, and travellers in the same journey which, they expect, will at last conduct them to the same blessed abodes where no discord enters. The liberal and comprehensive system of the gospel, thus plainly inculcates the doctrine of *universal love to mankind*.

THE last question necessary to be solved on this subject, is, what *degree* of love ought we to have for our neighbors? The sacred rule is, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy-self*: which, I suppose, is of the same import with this other commandment, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them*.

them.—Let us, in imagination, for a moment divest ourselves of our own persons, lay our self-love and prejudices aside, place ourselves in the situation, and assume the person and character of our neighbour, and whatever love we would in that case shew to ourselves, such love ought we in all cases to have for one another.

II. I now proceed to recommend the cultivation of this divine principle. Here I purposely avoid speaking of the mutual wants and dependence of men, and of the changeable and uncertain nature of human affairs. Such arguments can have no weight but with the selfish and interested; and to me it appears highly improbable that, by strengthening your love for yourselves, I shall encourage the love of your neighbour. I wish therefore that you would love one another from more liberal and generous motives—because it is supported by such bright examples—because it is the law both of your nature, and of your religion—because it contributes so much to the happiness of society, and to the perfection of the human character.

To

To *love one another* is to resemble God, whose image it is our greatest excellence, and should be our highest ambition to attain. *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Such a man possesses within his breast a spark of that celestial flame which exists in the Divine Nature. He thereby indicates that he is a son of God, and imitates his merciful Father in heaven. On the contrary, *he who loveth not, knoweth not God, neither dwelleth the love of God in him; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* Darkness is not more opposite to light, nor deformity to beauty, than cruelty, malevolence and oppression to the character of the Supreme Being. And can we imitate a more perfect pattern than God, who is the source of all perfection? can any thing be more noble, or more worthy of our attention than that which tends to assimilate us to Him, who is the origin of every thing that is good, amiable and excellent in human nature? *Be ye therefore followers of God, and walk in love.*

BUT

But the love of our neighbour is recommended by another example, better adapted to our imitation, because it was exhibited in human form, by one like ourselves, even Jesus our Master, *who left us an example that we should follow his steps.* The superiority of example to precept has been felt and acknowledged in every age. While the cold maxims of abstract reasoning address only the *understanding*, the history of a good and virtuous character forms a living picture of the beauty of holiness, and fails not to interest the *heart*. In vain would we look for a more perfect example of every virtue, but especially of love to man, than the character of Jesus presents. It was his love and compassion for the human race, which prompted him to leave the celestial mansions, and to sojourn upon earth. The same principle actuated every part of his conduct; for he went about continually doing good. Nothing could extinguish that divine flame which glowed in his breast. Though exposed to the most shocking ingratitude, and to every species of insult and injury, yet did his love to
man

man continue unabated. At last to crown all his generous exertions for the good of mankind, he died in their stead : *And greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* When his followers forsook him and fled ; when *malice* was directing all her shafts against him ; when *cruelty* assailed him in the most terrible forms ; when *justice* refused to listen to his cry ; when *pity* seemed to have fled from the society of men,—even then his countenance beamed with love and compassion to the human race ; even then *meekness* and *patience*, the constant companions of his sorrows, did not desert him, but dictated his last words, which breathed no spirit of malevolence, which contained no harsh threatening, which indicated no purpose of revenge, but were a prayer for his enemies and persecutors—*Father ! forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

My brethren, *to love one another* is the law of your *nature*. Man cannot exist but in society ; and society cannot exist without *love*. Those who assert that men are led to associ-

ate with one another from a principle of *fear* and not of *love*, appear to overlook this plain truth, that by coming together we would expose ourselves to danger; and certainly we will never associate with those of whom we are afraid. That there is a benevolent principle in the heart of man, is obvious from an appeal to fact. All the sophistry in the world can never destroy the evidence of conscious feeling. He who says that I love my neighbour from the pleasure of doing so, and from the prospect of return, might as well tell me that I eat and drink, not to preserve my own life, but for the sake of others, who will be ultimate gainers. On some occasions, it must be confessed, if we examine the state of our hearts, and our dispositions towards those with whom we associate, the existence of this principle is not so easily discovered. Where our own interest is nearly concerned, self-love, with her black train of envyings, jealousies, and rivalships, too often prevails over brotherly affection. But remove the picture to a proper distance, and then self-love, retiring to the back ground, leaves the
principal

principal place in the piece to benevolence. Who ever read the history of a generous and benevolent action, without approbation? Who ever heard of a hero nobly sacrificing his life for his friends and his country, & did not envy his happiness and glory? Who ever traced the steps of a Howard or a Hanway, whose heads were constantly devising, and whose hearts were incessantly prompting them to execute schemes for the good of mankind,—and did not applaud their exertions in the cause of human nature, did not glow with admiration of their virtue, did not enter into their feelings, and suppose himself acting with them the generous and benevolent part? The genuine and unbiassed language of nature will be found to differ in nothing from the words of our Saviour: *This is my commandment, THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.* To cultivate this principle, therefore, we have no need to force our inclinations, but only to give them free-scope. Benevolence is a native plant of the human mind; and, if the weeds of wicked and selfish passions are removed, it will infallibly spring up and flourish.

My

My brethren, *to love one another* is the law of your religion. Every system, whether of government or religion, has some prevailing principle which pervades the whole, and gives life and animation to all its parts. Thus *fear* has been said to be the principle of despotism, *honour* of monarchy, and *virtue*, (or *public spirit*) of a republic. The slightest attention to the Christian system must convince us that its ruling principle is *love*. From love the whole scheme originated; the manner of its accomplishment displays the most wonderful and unequalled love; the state of happiness to which it leads, is described as a state of perfect harmony and love; love is commanded as the ruling principle, and represented as the characteristic feature of all its disciples. To love one another, to live at peace with all men, to be daily employed in acts of goodness, to be slow to wrath, to forgive the wrongs of the injurious, to cultivate meekness, gentleness and kindness, are the constant precepts of that charitable religion which proceeded from the God of love, and was proclaimed by the Saviour of men :

men: That religion whose benign influences have dispelled the ignorance and barbarity which had hitherto overspread the greatest part of the earth, enlightened and civilized the human mind, softened and refined the manners of society, restrained the ravages and cruelties of war, promoted peace on earth and good will among men, mitigated the severity of punishment, and taught us to consider all men as the children of one universal parent who is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.

LAST of all, we ought to love one another, if we consider how much this principle contributes to the happiness of society and the perfection of human nature. It is not the man of great talents, but the man of a good heart, who is most useful to his fellow-creatures. To do acts of public and extensive utility, to scatter plenty over a land, to raise a fallen or support a sinking state, are indeed noble exertions, and call forth the admiration and gratitude of mankind. But they are the lot of
only

only a few men in an age or nation. Whereas the situation of no man prevents him from cultivating a benevolent heart: there is not a day nor hour of our lives wherein we may not wish well and do good to our neighbour. Indeed, did this principle universally prevail, the labours of the legislator, of the hero and of the patriot would be, in a great measure, unnecessary. Were men actuated by true brotherly love, they would respect the rights of their neighbour, without the injunctions of law, or the fear of punishment. Wars and rumours of war would be heard no more; the animosities, discords and debates which agitate private society, would instantly give place to peace and mutual good-will. Then, and not till then, may we expect the fulfilment of those happy predictions that *the wolf and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them. Then the wilderness and the solitary place would be glad, the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose. Then they would not hurt nor destroy in all the holy mountain of the Lord.* And can we conceive greater perfection in human nature?

nature? Behold how pleasant and how comely it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is as the dew of Hermon, as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion. Indeed we cannot form a more exalted idea of the happiness of the higher mansions, where every thing, like the calm and untroubled ocean, reflects the serenity of God's countenance—where the angers, quarrels, dissensions and storms which render this sea of life so troublesome and tempestuous, are all blown over, and where the reign of universal peace, harmony and love has begun, never to terminate.

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured shortly to illustrate and recommend the love of your neighbour, on a day sacred to the memory of that beloved Disciple, whose writings breathe so much of that spirit of love which his intimacy and friendship with his master must have inspired—a day rendered still more memorable by being the anniversary of a society whose fundamental principle is *brotherly love*, shining forth in the fair fruits of peace and harmony,

mony, charity and good works. A society the most liberal in its plan, the most benevolent in its intention, and the most inoffensive in its conduct, that ever was instituted in the world—A society which encourages and observes the most profound respect for the Supreme Being, the great Architect of Nature.—A society which embraces the whole human race, considers all mankind as one blessed family of brethren, and unites men of all ranks and conditions, of all parties and sects, of all nation and religions.—A society which inculcates rectitude and moderation of conduct by the most significant emblems.—A society from whose meetings all strife and debate, all riot and intemperance are, by the laws of its institution, excluded.—A society whose ears have been ever open to the cry of the indigent and needy.—A society which, if it did not stand secure in its own intrinsic excellence, might well claim respect from its high antiquity and the numerous catalogue of great and shining names of which it can boast.—A society which has excited, or can excite the indignation of none but the

the

the suspicious despot, or the blood-thirsty inquirer.

THE great objection which has been so often made to our institution, is the secrecy of our proceedings; that we have laws which are not to be divulged, and meetings removed from the eye of the inquisitive. Such an objection may excite fear in the breast of the tyrant, whose throne totters under him, and whose feeble arm is unable to wield the sceptre which he holds; but scarcely deserves attention in a land of freedom where no man has an inquisitorial power over the private opinions and conduct of another. By their actions all men ought to be judged; and to these, the members of this society need not be afraid to appeal. For it has been proved by universal experience, that our meetings have never once been prostituted to purposes hurtful to society; and that, while every other human institution has degenerated, this alone has preserved its original purity and exemption from every thing not calculated for the good of mankind. Societies
instituted

instituted for the laudable purpose of promoting knowledge and literature, forsaking the peaceful walks of science, have become the tools of a party, and given the sanction of their authority to the varying doctrines of the day. Even religion itself has been made the engine of despotism, or yielded to the fury of popular commotion : and the pulpit has at one time resounded with the maxims of non-resistance, and at another with incentives to insurrection. But *Free-Masonry* has ever kept itself *pure from the blood of all men*. In no age or nation have the assemblies of the Brotherhood become the seats of sedition, or the scenes of intrigue. In their meetings no dark cabals are formed against the constituted authorities ; no secret shaft is aimed at the reputation of the innocent ; no foul crime is committed which shuns the examination of the light. Like every other society, we have secrets and signs of distinction, which, upon application, may be made known to the duly qualified ; but these regard only ourselves. As far as the world is concerned, our grand secret is—**LOVE** :—Love, the

the cement of society and the balm of life;—
 Love, that adamant chain which reaches from
 heaven to earth and binds the universe together;
 —Love, eternal as God himself, without begin-
 ning and without end. In short, our funda-
 mental principles differ in nothing from those
 of our holy religion. So much indeed are they
 the same, that he who is a good *Free-Mason*
 will not be a *bad Christian*.

AFTER bestowing this due tribute of praise
 on what I conceive to be the best of all hu-
 man institutions, it is natural for me to exhort
 such of the brethren as are present, to walk
 worthy of their profession. *Let not your good
 be evil spoken of*; but be an example to
 others, and shew to the world, by your conduct,
 that you belong to a society which is inno-
 cent and virtuous—*Hereby shall all men know
 that ye are FREE MASONS, if ye love one a-
 nother*. This is a surer test of your initiation
 into the sublime mysteries of your art, than
 any sign or secret whatever. *Let all bitter-
 ness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and
 evil-speaking*

evil-speaking be put away far from you—And be ye kindly affectioned one towards another, in brotherly love preferring one another.

ABOVE all, let your meetings be conducted with that harmony, peace and good order, which brotherly love ought to produce, without which society is not worth enjoying, and without which it were *better to dwell in the wilderness, or on the house top.* No strife, or debate ought ever to be heard among you. You do not assemble to display your talents, or, in dire conflict, to brandish the weapons of political disputation, but as brethren and friends, to enjoy social conversation, and to promote one another's happiness.

PERMIT me to conclude this discourse with observing, to the honour of your institution, that on this grand Festival you piously *join trembling with your mirth*; that, within these sacred walls dedicated to the GOD of Heaven, you engage in his service, and acknowledge your dependence on him, before you proceed
to

to partake of his bounty. Let the same principle of religion actuate the whole of your proceedings on this day, and teach you the wisdom of temperance, sobriety and moderation. Under these limitations, I know no principle in the order to which you belong, or in the religion which you profess, prohibiting an indulgence in the innocent and lawful enjoyments of life. To every one who acts up to the true principles of Free Masonry, I may address myself in the words of the Preacher, *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God accepteth thy works.* And, with regard to every one of us, may he so accept our *work of faith and labour of love*, that, when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, we may find a place in that *eternal house*, which the great Architect of Nature has framed, and into which every true FREE MASON, and every good and virtuous man will be admitted, with this joyful welcome, *Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

Now

(30)

NOW TO GOD THE FATHER, SON AND
HOLY GHOST, BE PRAISE, HONOUR,
AND GLORY, FOR EVER AND EVER.

A M E N !

