

S25157

Cook, Joseph Bullein, 1775-1833.

Divine Charity.

Charleston, Hoff, 1812. 23, [1] pp.

MWA copy.

DIVINE CHARITY.

AN ASSOCIATION SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Charleston Baptist Association

AT THE HIGH HILLS OF SANTEE, S. C.

November 2, 1812.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE ASSOCIATION.

CHARLESTON, S. C.

PRINTED FOR THE ASSOCIATION, BY J. HOFF, BROAD-STREET.

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1 COR. xiii. 13.

And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.

THE Apostle, in the words under consideration, presents to our view three of the principal and leading Graces of the Spirit. It appears, however, to have been his design to shew the superiority of the latter to the two former.

In fact, they all appear to be intimately connected: They cannot possibly exist alone; for, in whatever soul faith exists, there also abideth Hope and Charity. They are produced, by the spirit of God, in regeneration, and are cherished and kept alive by his divine influence; yet Faith and Hope shall cease, but Charity, heavenly Charity, shall continue and improve forever.

Our subject is important. It immediately respects the people of God. Faith and Hope are their support, while suffering the afflictions of time, and charity, will be their crown of rejoicing in the realms of bliss. Let us, then, my Brethren, with devout attention, consider these several Graces of the spirit, and shew wherein Charity may be said to be the greatest of the three.

May the spirit of God assist us in the attempt and enable us to produce a clear and satisfactory elucidation of the subject.

I.—The first grace of the spirit, which we are to consider, and which takes the lead in the economy of grace, is faith.

By faith we are to understand a belief of the truth upon a spiritual understanding of it. Now it is evident that no natural, or unregenerate man, hath a spiritual understanding; for, says the Apostle Paul, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”—Therefore, he has not this faith; but is as destitute of it as a dead man is of life. It cannot be acquired by human wisdom, however profound it may be; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. In a word, faith is the gift of God. It appears to be communicated by the Holy Ghost to the soul, in the very moment in which it springs out of the death of sin into spiritual life. “And you hath he quickened,” says the Apostle to the Ephesians, “who were dead in trespasses and sins.” As an evidence that faith accompanies this divine quickening, or is produced in the very moment of it, let us adduce a proof or two from the word of God. The penitent thief, just before he expired upon the cross, addressed himself to Jesus, saying, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” This he undoubtedly said by the spirit of God, who enlightened his understanding and wrought faith in him to believe in Christ. The transition, from darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel, appears to have been in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Not long before this happy change he, with the other thief, had reviled the Saviour; for it is said, by St. Matthew, “That the *thieves* also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.”

Another instance we have in the Apostle Paul. He was journeying to Damascus, with enmity in his heart against the disciples of Christ, when he was suddenly arrested by the power of God. Being fallen to the earth he ejaculated this fervent prayer, viz. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” After this it was said respecting him, “Behold he prayeth.” Now we are

