

Ver. 44. *But I say unto you, love your enemies, &c.*] That is, as the Apostle Paul may be thought to interpret the words of Christ, [Rom. 12:20](#). *If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink:* unless our Lord should be supposed rather to regard the internal affection of the mind; since outward expressions of love, by words and works, are urged in the following exhortations: the actions of a man may be hated, and just indignation be expressed against them, and yet his person be loved, tenderness be used to him, and pity shown him: all men, even enemies, are to be loved with a natural love, as men; though they can't be loved with a spiritual affection, as brethren in Christ: and in natural affection there are degrees, according to the relation and circumstances that persons stand in to one another. *Bless them that curse you:* when wicked men curse you, as Shimei cursed David, don't *render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing;* give good words, use kind language, mild and soft expressions; such as may either win upon them, or put them to shame and silence: *bless, and curse not;* the latter belongs to them, the former to you; *let them curse, but bless thou;* curses better fit their mouths, and blessings thine. Blessing here, does not signify praising them, for that would be sinful, which is sometimes the sense of the word; nor wishing, or praying for a blessing on them, which is right and good; but this is mentioned

afterwards, as distinct from blessing; wherefore, it is better to understand it of a sweet and engaging address unto, and behaviour and conduct towards such, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. *Do good to them that hate you;* such as hate you in their hearts, and discover their hatred by their actions; don't make returns in the same way, but on the contrary, do them all the good you can; perform all the kind offices that lie in your power; let them partake of your bounty and liberality; if poor, feed, clothe, and supply them, as you are able, with the necessities of life; and give them wholesome advice for the good of their souls: by so doing, you will *heap coals of fire on their heads;* of enemies, make them friends; engage their affections to you, and you may be happy instruments in doing them good, both in soul and body: *and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.* What Christ here commands and advises to, he himself did; for as he hung upon the cross, he prayed for his crucifiers, who were then using him in the most despiteful, as well as cruel manner; saying, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do:* and in this he has left us an example, that we should tread in his steps; and herein he was quickly followed by his holy martyr Stephen; who, whilst he was stoning, prayed for his persecutors and murderers, saying, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* This breathes out the true spirit of Chris-

tianity, and is peculiar to it. The whole of this is directly opposite to the tenets of the Jews, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees; who allowed of revenge, and keeping anger against any person that had done them an injury, as has been observed: and which were also the sentiments of the Karaites, or Scripturarians, another sect among them who kept to the letter of the Scriptures, and rejected the traditions of the elders, which the Pharisees held: but in this they agreed with them, “that it was right to do good to their friends, and to forgive them that asked pardon of them; but to such men who rendered evil, and did not return to do well, that they might receive forgiveness, **אינו אסור לנקום ולנטור מהם**, *it is not forbidden to “revenge, and to keep anger against them<sup>s</sup>.”* It is indeed said<sup>t</sup> of their former holy men, **חסידים**, *Hasideans*, which some have thought to be the same with the *Essenes*, and a sort of Christians; however, were a better sort of Jews; that these “heard their reproach, but did not return it; and not only so, but they pardoned him that reproached them, and forgave him.” And it is reported of these men, that they used to pray to God to pardon and forgive all that disturbed them. But the Pharisees, whom

Christ had to do with, and against whom he inveighs, were men of another complexion.

Ver. 45. *That ye may be the children of your father, &c.*] Not that any became the children of God, by doing things in imitation of him: for as in nature no man becomes the son of another by imitating him, or by doing the things he does, but either by birth, or by adoption; so in grace no man becomes a child of God by the works he does, as a follower of God, but by adopting grace; and which is discovered in regeneration. Christ’s meaning is, that they might appear, and be known to be the children of God, by doing those things in which they resemble their heavenly father; and which are agreeable to his nature and conduct; as the tree is known by its fruit, and the cause by its effect: for where adoption and regenerating grace take place, the fruit of good works is brought forth to the glory of God. Some copies, instead of **υιοι**, *children*, read **ομοιοι**, *like*; and accordingly, the Persic version renders it thus, *that ye may be like to your father, which is in heaven*. Our Lord seems to have respect to the Jews, often having in their mouths this expression, **אבינו בשמים**, *our father which is in heaven*; and to their frequent boasting that they were the children of God; and therefore he would have them make this manifest by their being like him, or acting in imitation of him; *for*

<sup>s</sup> R. Eliahu in Adderet, c. 3. apud Trigland. de Sect. Karæorum, c. 10. p. 166, 167.

<sup>t</sup> Maimon. Hilch. Talmud Tora. c 7. sect. 13.

he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good. Christ instances in one of the greatest blessings in nature, the *sun*, so useful to the earth, and so beneficial to mankind for light and heat; which he calls *his sun*, his own, and not another's; which he has made, and maintains, orders to run its race, and commands it to rise morning by morning, and that upon good and bad men; one, as well as another; all equally share in, and partake of its benign influences, and enjoy the comfortable effects and blessings of it: *and sendeth rain on the just and unjust*; that is, on the fields of persons of such different characters, even both the early and the latter rain; which makes the earth fruitful, crowns it with goodness, and causes it to bring forth bread to the eater, and seed to the sower. This is one of the most considerable blessings of life; the gift of it is God's sole prerogative; it is peculiar to him; it is what none of the vanities of the Gentiles can give; and yet is bestowed by him on the most worthless and undeserving. This flows from that perfection of God, which the Cabbalists<sup>u</sup> call "*ehesed, mercy*, or benignity, to which it is essential to give largely to all, both *to the just and unjust*." The Jews have a saying<sup>x</sup>, that greater is the day of rain, than the resurrection of the dead; for the

resurrection of the dead is for the just; but rain is **בין לצדקים בין לרשעים**, *both for the just, and for the wicked*:" a way of speaking much like this here. They also used to praise God for rain; on this consideration, because it was given to unworthy persons. "y R. Jose Bar Jacob went to visit R. Joden of Magdala; whilst he was there, rain descended, and he heard his voice, saying, thousands of thousands, and millions of millions are bound to praise thy name, O our king, for every drop thou causest to descend upon us, **שאת נומל**, *because thou renderest good to the wicked*." Now our Lord instances in things which could not be denied, and they themselves allowed; and makes use of their own words, to engage them to imitate God, whom they call their father, by doing good to their enemies, and them that hated them, as well as to their friends and neighbours: yet sometimes they could scarcely allow, that the Gentiles had the same share in this divine favour with themselves; for they say<sup>z</sup>, that "God works by way of miracle, that rain should not be wanting in his land, although it is wanting in the countries of the Heathen; as he says, **Job 5:10** *who giveth rain on the earth*, which is the

<sup>u</sup> Sepher Shaar Hassamaim, Tract. 7. c. 12. p. 155.

<sup>x</sup> T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 7. 1.

<sup>y</sup> T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 14. 1. & Taanith, fol. 64. 2.

<sup>z</sup> Tzeror Hammor, fol. 152. 4.

land of Israel; for on that רב מטר, *a great rain* descends, and *sendeth waters*, מעטים, *few* (which is added to the text) *upon the fields*; which relates to what is without the land, whereupon it does not descend, but the substance of the land of Israel; therefore he saith, the Lord will open to thee his good treasure, and not to others.”