

This shews that the nature of the connexion is such, that neither of the two in connexion, has a right to the disposal of his own body, but that each one has a challenge upon the other. There is also included in this connexion, an interchange or mutual alienation of affections, as well as bodily transfer. Each one, therefore, has a challenge upon the other's affections—On this principle we hear the scriptures abundantly inculcating the mutual conferment of these, as a sacred duty—“*Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.*”\*

The commerce, therefore, in which the partnership of husband and wife is occupied, is of richer quality, and more interesting to personal felicity, than gold or richest pearls; and consequently there are in this life no contracts violated, nor trust betrayed, which afford a more bitter sting, or more deeply wound the sensible tender feelings of our race, especially the more reformed, than violations of this contract.

Does a wife shew an unfaithful disposition even in the disposal of things of smaller moment, she in measure loses the confidence of her husband, and in the same proportion his affections; but does she give reason to suspect her continency, that she, unfaithful to the sacred ties of wedlock, she at once sustains the loss of that in him, without which she might as

\* 1 Cor. vii. 3.

well be a widow as a wife: For it is but of very little, if any real advantage, to have a man without his affectionate love—Unfaithfulness, therefore, in this case is not only prejudicial to others, and the connexion in general; but is the very bane of its own actress.

Sensible of these evils, the prudent wife is very circumspect, and careful not to give her husband an occasion to suspect her continency, or want of affection for him; but in every proper way, cautiously exhibits testimony, that *he*, not another, is the object of her first choice.

Speaking of such a character, our author says, “*The heart of her husband, doth safely trust in her.*”\*

Very happying must be the consideration to the feeling husband, that he hath a companion with whom he can safely entrust not only his common concerns, but his richest treasure also; having no fear that his trust by her will be betrayed. It must also be very happying to a wife, to find that the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her—She must feel an internal satisfaction, which will amply compensate all the expense at which she obtains it.

In the exercise of this virtue, the prudent wife procures satisfaction to herself, happiness to her husband and much respectability to her family, in the view of all her judicious acquaintance.—But reproach and infamy, together with a mortifying remorse of mind,

\* Chap. xxii. 11.



must ever attend the opposite, so long as any sense of propriety or regard for real virtue possesses the human breast.

7. Another property most captivating in females, and of which the truly prudent wife is not destitute; is *Good Humour*.

Of such importance is this virtue in the female character, that without it all other beauties will dwindle and sink into nothing. Good humour is a property very pleasing and useful in persons of every description; and the opposite is not only very disagreeable, wherever found, but is also very prejudicial. Fractiousness is never attended with beneficial consequences; but invariably the reverse. A resolute firmness, and even proper resentment, at certain times, may not be amiss; but a pettish fractiousness always serves to injure, rather than help a good cause.

On this principle it must appear that fractiousness and ill humour would not be the best policy for a wife; but that a sweet and pleasant temper would always better serve her own interest.

Some, however, may conceive, if not suggest, that such are their trials and perplexities, that absolute necessity impels them to fret and be angry: and that to preserve good humour would not only be impracticable, but even unsuitable. It is not difficult to conceive, that the trials and perplexities of some wives at least, are very great: and that if any thing would afford a rational argument in favour

of fretful fractiousness, theirs would be the very case: still it might be wise to inquire, "What happy issue may rationally be expected from it? Will people in general conduct more agreeably! Will your husbands better conform to your wishes? Will they become more affectionate, kind, loving, and obliging husbands?"

If experience be called in as a witness, it is presumable the questions will be answered in the negative. We still pursue the inquiry, "What end is to be answered by the fretting and fractiousness of a wife?" Reason comes in and says, "That she thereby frustrates her own design, loses her influence in general, and sacrifices the affectionate esteem of her husband, one of the richest blessings of heaven."

Can this be the dictate of prudence?—Far, very far, from it.

Genuine prudence passes sentence, at least, of banishment on every growth so prejudicial to family peace, and the sweets of connubial life.

Does a wife undertake to drive her purposes, by fire and storm; she divesteth herself of those means most happily calculated to effect her own wishes, and equipeth herself with weapons, most directly calculated to frustrate them.

It appears not to have been a design of providence that women should be warriors, or carry their purposes by fire and sword: but they are endowed with means, more happily calculated, and not less pow-



erful, if rightly improved, for the accomplishment of their designs.

There is a certain efficacy in female persuasion, if wisely administered with native delicacy and sweetness of temper, which, to men of refined feelings, is irresistible. Prudent wives have it in their power by sweet influence, to lead their husbands into those measures, into which they could never be driven by any violent means.

But this, my fair friends, is frankly exposing to you as Sampson did to Delilah, by what means our sex may become weak, and easily led by yours. And the design is, that ye may learn wherein your strength lies, and be induced to act on your own proper ground, and improve your own proper weapons, and not those by which families, and even whole societies are so frequently thrown into confusion.

Men in general, are too hardy to be beaten, even into those measures into which they may easily be persuaded. And could they be beaten into them, it would still be very difficult beating them into affectionate kind husbands. However important then, the object which by the wife is obtained at the expense of her husband's good will, is at least, a losing bargain.

For a wife, to browbeat and maul her husband, is, by the wise man considered as one of the greatest plagues in life.—He says, "*A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman are*

*alike.*"\*—And again,—"*Tis better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.*"†

But in opposition to this bitter contentiousness, the truly prudent wife, cherishes and brings into exercise, a sweet placed temper, which composes one of the beauties of her excellent character; and by which she derives comfort to herself, and becomes ravishing to her husband. In all the bitter scenes of life, she ministers comfort to his heart.

Does he at any time return from the busy cares of life, laden with perplexities instead of finding his house a den of contention and filled with bitter discord, he finds it a seat of quietude, inhabited by that lovely pleasant soul, the serenity and sweetness of whose mind, sparkling in her countenance, darts inexpressible pleasure into his breast, pacifies the disquietude of his thoughts, and at once changes the raging billows, with which his mind has been tossed into a quiet peaceful harbour.

In fine, she enters composedly with him into all his trials, and with pleasure participates with him in all his joys. She is modest in her counsel and advice; her pleasant sociability in conversation, is ever entertaining, and affords a daily repast. She contends not for superiority nor strives to take the lead; but cheerfully accepts and occupies the station and capacity in divine providence allotted her. Thus

\* Proverbs xxvii. 15 † Proverbs xxi. 19.



she becomes the glory of her husband, a bright ornament to her family, and an honour to her sex.

Indulge me, my fair sisters, while I mention one property more, of the prudent wife, and for the present, will desist.

8. She is forward to promote religion, *the one thing needful*—She is not only forward to encourage and promote religion and worship in public, but family religion also, and piety, are objects of her peculiar concern. She ever possesses an anxious solicitude that her children, or those under her care, might not grow up without the fear of God before their eyes. And if it be her happy lot to be connected with a man of piety, she is particularly careful not to embarrass his endeavours to support family religion and worship. In all her arrangements, she makes such calculations as may serve to forward, and not retard his pious wishes. There are many embarrassments attending the performance of the Christian duties; but the prudent wife wishes not to increase, but, by all proper means, to diminish them. She is ready to lend her mite in rendering supportable and easy any burdens which may rest on the shoulders of her dear companion.

Thus it appears, from the present view of the prudent wife, that she not only performs those offices, and exercises those virtues, which are contributive to the comfort and happiness of her husband and family in the present life, but also, that she is an assistant to them, “while marching through this veil of tears to fairer worlds on high.”

“*Who then can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.*”—We now proceed,

To inquire in what distinguishing sense such a wife is from the Lord.

All our blessings are from the Lord, and we receive nothing but from him: still it is said, “*A prudent wife is from the Lord.*” From which we are led to conclude; that it was the design of inspiration to teach us that this was a blessing from the Lord, in some peculiar sense: but in what peculiar sense, is the object of our present inquiry.—Reason forbids that we should understand by the text that a prudent wife is in any extraordinary miraculous way, handed down from the upper regions, more than the other blessings of kind providence; still, in certain respects, this is distinguishable from the other blessings of providence.

Those properties which constitute the character of a prudent wife, are not objects of human traffic, liable to be transferred from one person to another. The blessings of providence in general, such as houses, lands, cattle, and other wealth, are so at the disposal of men, that they may be alienated, and shifted from one person to another. A father may confer such things upon his son, as an inheritance; but the graces of a prudent wife, are not alienable articles. Whoever, therefore, is so happy as to obtain a blessing of this kind, may rightfully consider himself as indebted to his maker, who is the author and giver of it; and not to his fellow man, as in the case



of commerce in general.—All the endowments of a prudent wife, are from the Lord; some in an ordinary, others in an extraordinary way—That sanctified temper, which may be considered as the principal pillar, or chief corner stone of all the excellencies in her beautiful structure, is from the special and supernatural agency of the divine spirit. In this respect, it may be said of her, that she “*is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*”<sup>\*</sup>—Thus is the prudent wife from the Lord.

Another design of inspiration, probably was to teach us the superior worth of such a blessing, in preference to all the blessings of a common providence—To represent this, as coming from an higher hand than that of man, must emphatically express the superior dignity and importance of it—Men may transfer things of less importance; but this is from an higher hand, this is from the Lord.

Without enlarging more on this head, permit me now to add a few remarks, and close the subject.

1. The subject may assist us, in understanding another observation of our author, in which he says, “*Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.*”<sup>†</sup>

By this it is evident, he means a prudent virtuous wife. A wife of any other description, he con-

siders as a great curse—When he says “*He findeth a good thing,*” we may understand him to mean, that he findeth a very great blessing. And we may proceed to observe further, in conformity to his instruction. “*That whoso findeth a truly virtuous, prudent wife, findeth one of the richest earthly blessings, which God ever bestows on man.*” Riches and honour, the idol of the world, even to the highest grade, are the blessings of providence; but neither of these are to be set in competition with the forementioned blessing; “*For, her price is far above rubies.*”

It may be remembered, at the same time, that this is a view of the subject, but on one side. The woman who findeth a husband of similar description, and in his capacity exercising similar graces, findeth a blessing of equal magnitude.

This view of the subject may serve to shew us, how great must be the loss those experience, who are called to part with companions, of the foregoing description and character.

The delicacy of the case, forbids my making any application of the subject, to my own particular circumstances. This application therefore is cheerfully submitted to every judicious mind, acquainted with the properties of my departed companion.

2. The foregoing view of this subject, leads us to a presumption, that the matrimonial connexion, is by many, very injudiciously treated—And this, in the two following respects.

<sup>\*</sup> John, i. 13.      <sup>†</sup> Prov. xviii. 22.



1st. It is formed without due consideration; and  
 —2d. It is improved, without becoming wisdom  
 and prudence.

When young people form this connexion, without exercising proper discretion, if they are happy in their connexion, it must be of mere chance, or accident—And yet, in forming this very important connexion, how great a proportion of the youth, appear evidently to be more influenced, or actuated by mere fancy, or the impulses of certain irrational propensities, than by sound judgment?—And when the connexion is formed, fancy and these slight inclinations, having run their race, and reason begins to govern the man, how often does the imagined object disappear, and all its fancied beauties flee like birds of darkness at the approach of light? And the rational mind is left without an object of delight.—Instances of this kind, are but too frequent; and where judgment and reason are not admitted into council, in deciding things of this magnitude, happy consequences are not to be expected.

And when those who are in the connexion, do not exercise that wisdom and prudence which the importance of the subject requires, they have no reason to expect happiness from it.

Parties designing to form this intimate connexion, usually view it of importance, that by respectful conduct, they seek to please each other; but after the connexion is formed, proper tokens of respect mutually shewn, is not of less but much greater im-

portance. And yet, how frequent are instances, after connexion, in which the general system of conduct between the parties, is entirely shifted; and in which they throw off the mask, and act under very different colours; instead of seeking to please, they now seek to irritate and provoke; mutually admiring at the same time, that they are not more esteemed, and better treated by their companions.

From the injudiciousness expressed in these, and similar ways, both in the forming, and in the improvement made of this important connexion, spring up an endless train of evils in families.

3. The foregoing view of this discovers the connubial connexion to be a very important transaction. And indeed, it is one of the most serious and important transactions (covenanting with our maker excepted) which men ever perform in life; and is attended with consequences the most weighty and interesting to individual happiness.

How unbecoming, then, and unwise, is that levity and inconsideration with which by many it is treated?—And again—Of how much importance, that the youth be rightly and timely taught and instructed in a rational and becoming manner, of treating and pursuing an object of such magnitude and importance to them; lest they take some unlucky stride before their eyes are opened, and their case be irrecoverable. For want of becoming instruction of this kind, many connexions become objects of mere



necessity, not real choice. And connexions formed on this ground, afford no promising prospects of happiness to the parties. Especially is it of importance, that the minds of young females, be timely inspired with right and virtuous sentiments, as their very first maxims. The want of this, has a most pernicious effect upon the whole species.

The important office of instructing and forming the manners of daughters, principally devolves on mothers; but if they, by reason of foregoing neglects, or other causes, are inadequate to the task of instructing their daughters; such daughters will be very liable to grow up with a vitiated taste, and depraved manners. On this ground, we behold many young daughters corrupted, and even ruined, before they arrive at the proper age to appear in public view. And this again, like an hereditary consumption, is liable to be taken by their daughters, and so the contagion spread from generation to generation.

Of how great importance, then, is it, in view of public, as well as private good, that parents, and those to whom the care and instruction of children is committed, should improve every opportunity of which they are possessed, to expose unto the view of their children, the extreme dangers attending vicious habits, the high importance of the scene for which they are candidates, and the hazard of being governed by fancy, or the unruly appetites of nature; and use all their influence, to form their taste and sentiments aright, and lead their manners into virtuous channels,

before they are overtaken by those temptations, and plunged into those snares, which may prove ruinous to their characters here, and to their souls for ever.

Finally my friends, let me conclude this subject, with a general request, to the three following classes:

1. That those who are young, and are candidates for this important connexion, would exercise that discretion, and wisdom, which may properly be expected from creatures endowed with rationality; that they would view and treat the subject, in some measure at least, according to its magnitude and importance; and that they would not sacrifice one of the richest blessings of heaven to mere fancy, or unruly appetite; but let reason and their best judgment, occupy the first seats in council, when transacting a business of such interesting importance.

2. That husbands would be persuaded to treat their wives with all the honour, benevolence, love, and affectionate tenderness, which their delicate constitution, their circumstances, and the nature of the connexion require; that they would ever bear it on their minds, that their connexion entitles them to no more respect, than what their good conduct merits; and therefore, to treat their wives with kindness, is the direct way to secure their own comfort, the good of their families, and the peace of society,  
—And—

3. That wives would make every effort for excelling in the virtues, pertaining to their sex and capacity; and that they would diligently strive in all



laudable, virtuous ways, to render themselves agreeable, and well pleasing unto their own husbands; and that in the ways of well doing, they may merit and possess the honourable character of prudent, virtuous wives.

In these ways, may every house become an asylum of love and peace; and every pair find sweet satisfaction in their mutual endeavours to serve and please; may virtue, and true piety predominate in every breast: and this day's repast, be seasoned with that warmth of mutual affection, which shall produce a more entertaining and pleasant flavour than the richest spices of India.—And all the praise be given to God \*

*\* This discourse was publicly delivered on an anniversary Thanksgiving.*

### DISCOURSE III.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXII. VERSE 3.

*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

**O**F all the relative duties in life, there are but few, if any, of greater importance; and which are attended with more durable, and interesting consequences than those which parents owe to their children. Many are the happy fruits which may result from a due attention to their education.

But a greater train of evils, and more unhappy consequences, can scarcely be ascribed to any one source in life, than what are found by experience and observation, to spring up from parental neglects in training up their children.

Great wisdom, therefore, and goodness have been displayed in divine providence, in so ordering and disposing things that children might be under the best advantage for an early, and pious education. To this end, as one important object, was instituted, that happy connexion of husband and wife: that children when entering this scene of action, being endowed with rationality, and made candidates for places of boundless importance, might not be left, like the bra-



tal offspring, destitute of all restraint, and means of information; but might fall under the guardianship and tuition of those who, from a sense of duty as well as tender affection, might feel strong inducement to train them up in those ways in which they should go.

Having thus provided for the wellbeing of our race, God has assigned to parents, as their peculiar charge, the guardianship and instruction of their children.

And this, like all other duties of divine institution, has its annexed encouragement.

Our text is a specimen.

But, respecting the promise in our text, "*when he is old, he will not depart from it,*" different opinions have prevailed. Some understand the promise in a literal sense, to import 'that he will positively pursue the ways of piety unto life'—Others understand this promise in a more general sense, to import 'that children will generally conform to those pious instructions and examples which by their parents have been enforced upon them.'

The latter of these appears the most probable sentiment. In whichever sense, however, we understand this promise, there must be very powerful inducement, to a faithful discharge of parental duty.

But, in further pursuing this important subject, be it our business,

I. To inquire into the import of training up children in the way they should go.—And,

II. To bring under consideration some of the inducements to this interesting duty.

1. What is the import of training up children in the way they should go.

In this comprehensive duty, are comprised, the three following things, Government, Example, and Instruction—To these, we shall attend, in their order.

In the first place, to GOVERNMENT.

This is one of the leading branches of parental duty. Parents, by the great author of their existence, are constituted the governors of their children. To this purpose says inspiration, "*Children obey your parents in the Lord.*"\*

This necessarily supposes the right of government to be vested in the parent. The general direction, also, for parents to train up their children, so frequently repeated in the scriptures goes to the same purpose; and in the view of reason, sufficiently establishes the sentiment.

Respecting this branch of parental duty, a few things may profitably be noticed.

1. Every child, at proper age, should have the natural perverseness of his temper subdued; and his mind brought to bow to the will of his parent. This must be effected, if other measures prove

\* Eph. vi. 1.



ineffectual, by the due administration of penal authority.

To determine what is the most suitable time or period for engaging this disagreeable task, must be referred to the wisdom, and judgment of the parent. The child, however, should be able distinctly to understand his parent's will, and commands.

To inflict punishment where there is no knowledge or understanding for what it is inflicted, can afford but very little if any prospect of good. But, the longer this business is delayed, after the child is able fully to understand for what he is corrected, with the greater difficulty will the desired end be effected.

Since the first apostasy of man, a certain obstinacy, or perverseness, has been found to prevail in the human mind, which inclines to a state of independence; and to resist all wholesome order, rule, and government.

This contagion, in our race, has taken an universal spread. Every member of this numerous family has become, more or less, infected. Some small appearances of this native disorder, are discoverable in infants, even in the first traces of rational action.

It is of high importance, that suitable measures be improved, and that in an early period of life, for the eradication of this malignant disorder which is so ruinous to that peace and happiness of which our race are susceptible.

Parental corrections are the instituted means for effecting this important end—Says our inspired author, "*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*"\*

The correction of children is a very painful part of parental duty; especially, to the tender compassionate mind; but however painful or trying to the natural passions, and tender affections, our inspired author considers the neglect of it when necessary, as betraying a want of genuine regard for the child's real good, and highest happiness. "*He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*"†

To correct children, and bring into due subjection their temper, which is naturally turbulent, and in some, virulent, is contributive to their present comfort, and the peace of the family; lays a foundation for their becoming more useful in society; and has a most happy tendency to their eternal well-being.

Hence, we are admonished—"*Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.*"‡

The wise parent, then, who truly loves his child, who seeks his greatest good, and the peace of community, will forego his own opposing passions, and swallow the pill which, though bitter to the taste, is attended with such sweet, and happy fruits.

\* *Prov. Chap. xxii. 15.*—† *xiii. 24.*—‡ *xxiii. 13.*



Parents should not only clip the first bud of this malignant growth, in their children; but, should it again revive, and appear to vegetate, proper means should still be continued for its eradication and complete suppression.

This part of parental duty, is attended with that peculiarity of circumstances which renders it necessary that it be administered with wisdom and prudence, in order that it be productive of the happy ends contemplated.

We therefore observe—

2. A parent should never correct his child from sentiments of revenge; nor in the exercise of angry passion.

This is an institution of too serious importance to be improved in those ways.

Still, as a specimen of the human depravity, many there are, who never administer correction otherwise.

This kind of correction is liable to be attended with the two following very unhappy consequences. The one is, the child is in danger of injury, and great abuse.

Angry passion rages like the boisterous ocean, and is not under the guidance of reason or discretion. Under this influence, a person may be led to do that, at which his deliberate mind would even shudder. How far, then, does such a frame of mind appear from being suitable to execute an office of such delicacy and importance?

The other unhappy consequence is, the loss of the parent's dignity, in the view of the child.

Nothing in life has a more direct tendency, than this indiscreet mode of proceeding, to eradicate from the youthful mind, all reverence for parental authority, and to liberate it from all fear of any thing in the parent, but his revengeful hand.

It is of no small importance, in any government, that dignity be supported in the governor. If the governor be destitute of dignity, the government will of necessity fall into contempt: and all the thunderbolts of wrath and indignation will, but in vain, be sent forth for its protection.

A parent ought never to sacrifice his dignity, and with that, his influence over his child, by indulging an angry, hasty passion.

In order to the support of government, with dignity in a family, a parent should ever treat his child with mildness, and serenity of temper: and all correction should be executed with deliberation, and seriousness. And instead of shewing a bitter, malignant temper, and using harsh, irritating, and threatening language, it would be much more suitable, that the parent address a short petition to his maker for assistance to a right performance of a duty so important.

Correction, in support of government, should never appear to be the fruit of a malicious spirit; but as far as may be, the subject should be convinced that it proceeds from a principle of real good will.



3. If the child, which is the subject of discipline, has arrived to the years of understanding and discernment, the parent before correction should use much care to convince him of his criminality and desert of punishment.

Correction will have but little tendency to a reformation, where the subject has no conviction of his guilt and ill desert.

The parent should also labour to impress the mind of his child with a lively sense of the criminality and vileness of disobedience: shew him how ruinous it is to good order, the peace and well being of a family, and to his own personal reputation. It would be well for the parent to enforce correction, that the precepts or requisitions, by the child counteracted, were rational and just.

Children, when very young, may have some sense of propriety, in things of this kind: and, as their capacity and understanding increase, their means of information, and conviction should also be increased.

4. It is not always best to inflict punishment according to the desert of the offender.

Forgiveness at sometimes may answer more valuable purposes than punishment.

This may serve to convince the child of his parent's lenity: and that to gratify malignant passion was not his leading principle; but the support of peace and good order in his family. When this can be accomplished, and the child's veneration for his parent's authority not diminished, it may well be considered a happy substitute.

But pardons should not be dealt out with too great liberality; lest the government, like laws without penalty, should rather countenance and invite, than prevent disobedience.

The instituted government of a family is a kind of monarchy, and is very absolute; yet, in order that the salutary ends, which it contemplates be answered, it is necessary that the conduct of parents in administering government, ever appear to be founded on the principles of reason and equity.

Parents must not be actuated by sentiments of tyranny; nor by that excessive indulgence by which they can readily sacrifice the peace, and real well-being of their family merely to gratify certain affections, not guided by reason.

Between these two opposite extremes, a proper medium should ever be observed.

5. Parents should seek to promote, in their children, laudable, obedient conduct, by proper encouragement, as well as to *repel disobedience by penal inflictions.*

By this, however, is not intended, that parents should adopt that servile, degrading method, which by some is adopted, of hiring their children to perform acts of obedience to their commands, as a substitute for better government.

Parents may approve, and applaud the *good* deeds of their children, as well as *frown upon their bad*: and at certain times propose some *premium* for laudible exertion.



But does a parent after commanding his child to perform a certain deed, in case of his refusal, then proceed to hire his compliance, he purchases the child's compliance, not merely at the expense of a sugar-plum, or a toy; but at the full expense of his own parental dignity: and henceforth is not to expect conformity in his child, to his own commands, but on the payment of a certain sum, as the parties can agree.

This way of capitulating with children is directly calculated to destroy family government, and subordination, with all the happy effects of it.

6. Admonitions, warnings, and reproofs, properly administered, may be very useful, in the parental dominion.

Children, like the subjects of other governments, need frequently to be admonished of their duty, to be warned of the ill consequences of disobedience, and to be reprov'd in cases of less deviations from proper rule.

These parts of discipline, though less severe, may have in their place very extensive influence and happy consequences, in the preservation of peace, and good order in a family.

But in lieu of these mild means of government, parents should not substitute, as many unluckily do, a petulant scolding at their children, with virulent threats of severe punishment.

There may be cases in which a parent may rightfully annex certain penalties to the violation of cer-

tain commands; but in such cases, he should ever be careful to preserve his own honour, by faithfully executing his own appointments.

Should a parent, even in one instance, fail of executing his promise, he would never again be fully believed by his child. The child would think he might again transgress with impunity.

Some parents are very profuse in their threats of punishment; but very remiss in fulfilling them. But a more direct and ready way than this, can scarcely be devised, to destroy all parental influence, and subordination among children.

Every species of scolding, and sourness of language, used by parents in treating with their children, will have a very pernicious effect upon the tender minds of the little subjects, and go far towards diminishing their reverence, and respect, for parental authority.

This will also unhappily tend to impregnate these young minds with the same malignant disorder, which may grow up with them to the great injury, in future, of the public peace.

To this mischievous method of irritating, and fretting the minds of children, by scolding, and threatening, the Apostle Paul appears to have had an eye, when he says, "*And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath.*"\*

By a right improvement of admonitions, warnings, and reproofs, some children may be awed into obedi-

\* Eph. vi. 4.



ence, and becoming submission; but it is not to be expected that these will in every instance, answer all the exigences of family government. Children when young, like those in adult age, are found to possess different constitutions, and tempers; and that which may serve to reclaim one, may not another.

When these mild measures fail, more rigorous must be pursued, as circumstances may require.

But, when to punish, and with what degree of severity; and when to forbear punishing, is left to the wisdom, and discretion of parents; who must hereafter give an account of their stewardship to their great Lord and Master.

General directions are given unto parents, "that they train up their children in the ways in which they should go." Or "that they train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

But there is such a vast variety of different circumstances under which children may be found; together with different constitutions, and tempers, of which they may be possessed; it would be wholly impossible to give an uniform rule for their correction which would fitly apply in all cases.

Parents are without exception, under advantages to be the best human judges: God has therefore seen fit to give them that power, and assign them that capacity, and giving them general rules for their procedure, has left the application of more particular and circumstantial things to their wisdom and discretion.

That parents may be the least liable to misjudge in the execution of this important trust, or deviate from the will of their Maker; they should ever let the real good of the child, and the peace of society be their ruling motives; not any malignant passion of their own, nor indulgent affection which has not reason for its guide.

Neither malignant passion, nor indulgent affection, without the guidance of reason, are creatures fit to take the lead in conducting things of this importance. But a genuine regard for the child's good, and the peace of community, will not be very liable to pursue the injury of either. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour."

This should be the parent's guide; and of this should he endeavour to afford conviction to his child whenever he is called to administer correction.

To this end he should not proceed with rashness, or to much haste, in his administrations; but with becoming deliberation, and firmness.

Under a good and regular system of civil government, no person is ever convicted of a crime, and punished, but on a fair and candid trial, and in view of substantial testimony. And why a child should be punished on other ground is difficult to shew.

To punish any subject, whether young or old, without a candid hearing, and sufficient evidence of criminality, would be directly calculated to render government as much a terror to the virtuous as to the vicious; and to take off all that restraint from



evil doing which it is principally designed to promote.

Would parents then support their government with dignity, they must avoid arbitrary rashness, give judgment with cool deliberation; and let all their administrations proceed on the apparent principles of love, tenderness, and equity.

Family government is an important part of parental duty; and when this is well executed, very beautiful and pleasant are the effects. "It is like the precious ointment which ran down upon Aaron's beard." As a peculiar blessing, it is said, "Thy children shall be like olive plants round about thy table."

But to execute this duty in the most advantageous manner, much care, wisdom and prudence are necessary. Parents, having possessed themselves with good and pious resolutions, should steadfastly pursue those maxims which are most readily calculated to effect the great ends of family government, during that period in which children are committed to their control.

In the second place we proceed to consider *EXAMPLE*, as another important thing comprised in parental duty.

There are but very few, if any other methods, by which impressions may be more forcibly made on the human mind than by example.

By word of mouth is information given; but example serves to familiarize the ideas received; and consequently, with greater force, to impress the mind.

Of this we collect abundant testimony, from our common observation, in things both virtuous and vicious. But the force or efficacy of example on the mind of the subject, is usually in proportion to the conceived importance of the character by whom such example is given.

Children, especially when young, are wont to embrace very exalted ideas of parental dignity; and to conceive that there are but few, if any persons in life, of more important characters than their parents; and consequently, the example of no other persons in life, will be liable to have greater influence upon their young and tender minds.

Young children are wont to conceive that whatever their parents approve must be right; and that whatever they disapprove must be wrong: they look up to them, as to infallible guides.

Parents' examples are of course, in the view of children, of greater weight than all the divine precepts. Should parents enforce, by word of mouth, any lessons of good instruction; and should not support them by concurring example, such instruction would be liable to obtain but very little influence.

In this view, then, it must appear that the example of parents is an object of no small importance, in their capacity as guides to their children: and that it has no small influence in forming their manners, and establishing their characters for life.

(This leads us, consequently, to take some notice of that kind of example which parents should set before their children.



In general, they should exhibit to their view, an example of that way in which *they* should go. Or otherwise, they should exhibit an example of piety towards God, and righteousness towards men.

It would be but a preposterous attempt in parents, to train up their children in those ways in which they never walked themselves.

It would be hard for children to believe, fully, those instructions of their parents, which they see them daily counteracting, by their own conduct.)

But to mention some particulars.

1. Parents should be careful to support, in the view of their children, a shining example of all that respect, kindness, tenderness of reputation, honesty, and benevolence, which they would either wish to experience themselves, or that their children should experience from others.

These things being early impressed, not only by precept, but by the force of daily example, upon the young and tender minds of children, and by the example too of parents, which is of all others, the most powerful upon the youthful mind, would become a kind of second nature; and take such deep root that nothing but a series of opposite examples could ever eradicate the happy impressions.

But on the other hand, if children daily behold in their parents, conduct towards neighbours, disrespectful, unkind, defamatory, dishonest, and unmerciful, it will be but reasonable to expect that these will take root in the youthful mind; and like weeds

in a fertile garden, will grow and spread themselves to the great detriment if not the entire ruin of all happy fruits.

Evil habits, like poisonous weeds, in our depraved world, are liable to be more flourishing and prolific, than those which are good and useful.

2. Parents should present their children with examples of sobriety, uncorrupted language, chastity, fidelity, and becoming subordination to every wholesome rule and order.

These are important duties pertaining to those stations in life for which children may be candidates. But the opposite to these are evils so prevalent, and such is the efficacy of example upon unexperienced minds, that it would be but very easy for parents, by their manifest approbation in concurring conduct, to lead their children into the practice of them all.

Children will very readily catch the use of vulgar obscene and profane language; the practice also of drinking, quarreling, cheating, and stealing, where they find these things approbated by parents, and sanctioned by their concurring conduct. It is, therefore, in this view, of very great importance, that all such vicious practices be kept as much as possible even from the knowledge of children; and especially that they should not appear to be approbated by the conduct of parents: and that examples of conduct, virtuous and laudable, be continually pressed on their growing minds.



As children are probably soon to commence members of more extensive communities, in life, they should early have their minds familiarized with the true principles of peace and good subordination.

3. Parents should exhibit, before their children, the example of piety towards God.

The reverential worship of God, in public and in families, is not only the dictate of sound reason, but is a divine institution. God requires of his rational creatures that they stately present their acknowledgments, and offer their worship before him. This is but a reasonable service; and as such should be impressed by the example, as well as by the precept of parents, on the minds of children. This might go far towards inkindling up in them, even in an early period, some sense of their dependence on their maker, and of their obligations to him. In this way, they might be influenced to early and true piety.

But such is the depravity of human nature that many refuse this reasonable service, live in the stated neglect of worshiping God, and the baneful consequences of such examples on the minds and conduct of youth, are too obvious to every observing mind, to render necessary a full and particular detail.

Observation too frequent teaches us, that where children are trained up in the neglect of all instituted worship, they are usually lost to all sense of piety and moral obligation; their minds vitiated, and their manners more like the heathen than enlightened beings.

Parents should therefore diligently teach their children, even by continued example, that most efficacious mode of instruction, to fear and worship God; to reverence his sabbaths, his sanctuaries, his word, his ordinances, and all his institutions.

If things of this kind are not early imprinted on the minds of children; those of an opposite kind will doubtless occupy the place: and when once implanted, with much difficulty will they ever again be eradicated.

*A flood gate of iniquity is opened, and a sweeping torrent of vicious examples is pouring in upon them; sueing for their attention, approbation, and compliance. Examples, therefore, of piety, should take the first possession of their minds.*

These should be perpetuated, and kept continually in their view, as monitors and guides to their unguarded minds, during the whole term of parental control.

This, as it is readily conceived, is one of the most difficult and expensive parts of parental duty. Simply to correct the errors of children, or to teach them by word of mouth how they should conduct, is comparatively but an easy task.

To enforce such instruction by living example must cost us some care and pains.

To do this, we must in fact, perform the Christian duties, and live the Christian life.

But however difficult or painful this may be to any, it is to be remembered that it is not more so than the right performance of the duty is important.



Children are candidates for eternity. The guardianship and instruction of these little immortal minds, are committed to parents. Parents must answer to their great and righteous judge, for the manner in which they have executed their trust. Their instructions, and examples, will have very great influence, not only in determining their course in life; but also in determining their fate for ever.

Let parents, then, never seek to excuse themselves in the neglect of this important business; nor be deterred by any considerations whatever, from pursuing their children's highest interest and happiness, in every proper way. Let them ever impose proper restraints upon the unruly inclinations of their children; and especially let them ever exhibit those examples of virtue and piety which may tend to their endless felicity.

In these ways, may they be the happy instruments of fortifying and preparing the minds of their children to withstand those torrents of evils and temptations with which they may be attacked in life. And may they hereafter have the pleasing and joyful prospect of beholding them in the realms of bliss above.

## DISCOURSE IV.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXII. VERSE 6.

*Train up a Child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

**H**AVING, in the foregoing discourse upon this subject, taken some notice of the Government and example, included in parental duty,

We now proceed to the third general thing comprised in training up Children—which is **INSTRUCTION.**

But this, if used without restriction, opens into an unlimited field—It may respect agriculture, the mechanic arts, navigation, the martial science, mathematics, philosophy, and the finer arts; with all their connections to the greatest length.

Proficiency in these sciences, according to the opportunity, and advantages with which any may be endowed, is truly laudable as well as beneficial in life—Our author was a great proficient in literature, and friend to science in general; yet in our text, he doth not appear to have so much respect to improvement in any knowledge or sciences as



that which relates more directly to morality and religion.

To this, therefore, shall we have principle respect, in the present subject.

Previously to our pointing out the particulars of parental instruction—We premise, that a parent is constituted the minister in his own house, to teach and instruct his children in all those things which make for their good here, and felicity hereafter.

But, that parents may profit by this subject, let the two following inquiries engage their attention.

1. What are the proper subjects of parental instruction, in training up children in the way they should go.—And,

2. What is the manner in which such instruction should be communicated.

1. What are the proper subjects of parental instruction?

In general—

Parents should instruct their children in their duty both towards their fellow men; and towards their maker.

In what then are parents to instruct their children, as duty towards their fellow men?—

The present design of this subject does not admit of our treating, particularly on refinement and gracefulness of manners, which is a very useful, and entertaining theme, and has very profitably employed the pen of many learned and judicious writers.

Our subject leads us more particularly to a consideration of those things in conduct, which are not

only incumbent as religious duties here; but hold a close connexion with a future state of felicity.

—To observe then—

1. Parents should teach their children the principles of reverence, and respect to the aged, and superiors.—To reverence and respect the aged, is not only a dictate of reason, and common sense; but is, also, particularly enjoined by the most high—“*Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God.*” LEV. xix. 32.

That we may feel the propriety of this injunction, we have it proclaimed in PROV. xvi. 31. “*The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.*”

Should it here be suggested that ‘this is instruction not peculiar to youth, and childhood?—Let it be observed that youth, and childhood, is the proper period to lay a foundation for the practice of all the subsequent virtues of life.

Childhood is the seed time, in which all the maxims for future practice, should be implanted.

If, therefore, reverential respect to the aged, is ever to be inculcated as a rational duty, this is the time to bring forward the instruction.

2. Children should be taught to honour and obey rulers, and those in authority—Respectful subordination to the authority under which, in the course of divine providence, we are placed, is a very reasonable duty, as well as interesting to the peace of



community; and a duty not only enjoined, on the Jewish nation, in ancient day; but is also enforced by Jesus Christ, and his apostles; and applied to all people.

Says Christ, when a certain question, was brought forward, with a view to tempt, and try him; whether he would acknowledge subordination to human authority, "*Render therefore unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's.*"—By which he evidently designed to enjoin obedience to the existing authority, as an incumbent duty.

The apostle Paul also exhorts the Christians at Rome, "*to be subject unto the higher powers*"—And says "*The powers that be, are ordained of God*"—Then he further exhorts, "*Render therefore to all, their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*"

The apostle Peter says, "*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.*"

From these, and similar representations in scripture, it appears that submission and obedience to proper authority is a great Christian duty incumbent on those of every nation and age.

This is, therefore, an important subject for instruction; and the first principles of which should be early implanted in the minds of children.

If children be well instructed in this important duty, while they are young, and their minds pliable, there may be rational hope exercised, that, as they

grow in capacity for usefulness, they will become wholesome, and peaceable members of community.

3. The principles of civility and good manners towards all men, should early be implanted in the minds of children.

The apostle Peter says, "*Honour all men.*"—By this, the apostle doubtless intends, that civil, respectful treatment, and good manners, be shewn to those of every rank and description. This is contributive to peace, and friendship; but a disrespectful, imperious treatment, leads to a different end—it is a source of almost an endless train of contentions in community. To avoid this great evil, the apostle Paul exhorts "*if possible, to live peaceably with all men.*" To do this, we must be civil and respectful in our treatment of them.

If, then, civil, respectful treatment be inculcated in the sacred scriptures, as a part of religious duty; this of course composes one part of that instruction which parents are bound to communicate unto their children.

4. Parents should teach their children the principles of honesty in deal with their fellows.

Honesty is a very important property in any community; and is abundantly inculcated in the sacred scriptures, as a religious duty.

This, therefore, composes an important branch of the parental tuition.



That this may take deep root, and have an abiding and lasting effect upon the minds of children, these happy seeds should early be implanted.

When very young, they should not be indulged in cheating one another in the value of a button, or a single pin,

For, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth"

If children, when young, are indulged even in such small things, they will soon advance to larger, and larger things; and from that to taking articles without leave: and thus, by degrees, arrive to the stage of first rate knaves, and thieves.

When once a flood-gate is hoisted, there is no knowing to what length the torrent will proceed.

It is very presumable, that many of our greatest villians, even thieves, and robbers, might date the beginning of their progress in iniquity from some such indulgence in very small things.

Of how great importance then, is it, that parents, in the most forcible manner, early impress this instruction on the minds of their children?

5. Children should be taught to treat, with great circumspection, and tenderness, the character of neighbours—The wise man says, "*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.*"

By the *good name*, he doubtless intends, a good character, or reputation. And common observation teaches us, that, among men, in general, nothing is

holden in higher estimation, than their character; and consequently, that there is nothing on which an attack can be made, but life itself, which can afford more sensible feelings, than attacks on character.

Invasions, therefore, of this kind, are peculiarly prejudicial to personal comfort, and felicity; and of all others, the most contributive to ill will, discords, and contentions, in community—Very great care, therefore, should be used, in every community, to prevent the propagation of a defamatory spirit so detrimental to the reputation, and peace of its members.

And, in as much as children are candidates for some capacities in life, and for becoming members of society, it is of no small importance, that they be early instructed in the principles of peace, and good neighbourhood. This is liable to have a permanent, and beneficial effect upon their conduct through the whole course of their lives.

6. Children should also be taught, in their early days, to be kind, and charitable, towards their fellow creatures.

Such is the calculation of divine providence, respecting our race, that each individual, in his measure and degree, is dependent on others of his fellow creatures; and consequently, all men in their turn, stand in need of kind and charitable deeds.

This shews the foundation, and propriety that every one should shew kindness, and perform deeds



of charity, as the necessities, and distresses of others may require.

And as children are coming on to the stage, to occupy the places of their predecessors; and as their present age is the most promising, for their being moulded into virtuous habits, and having a foundation laid for their becoming useful in the present, and happy in the coming world; it hence becomes very important that they early be instructed in all the social virtues; and that their young and tender minds be impressed with such principles, with all the force and energy of which their parents are capable.

Are children indulged in unkind, cruel practices, even though the suffering object be nothing greater than some small animal falling within their power, the consequences may be very unhappy, in future life—Every human passion is capable of growth, and enlargement. And if a spirit of cruelty find countenance in youthful days, the same may soon be found preying on the human species, which has now but an insect, for its greatest object—Young children, therefore, should not be indulged in exercising such a spirit, even by robbing little innocent bird's-nests, or torturing their young.

But, while such small things are the objects of their gratification, or displeasure, they should be taught to exercise a sympathetic kindness towards objects of distress—And this, growing up with them from childhood, to adult age, may have a very happy effect upon their conduct through life.

7. One of the great evils which has a peculiar influence in preventing children from embracing and practicing the virtuous instructions communicated unto them by their pious parents, is that torrent of vicious examples which is continually presenting itself to their view—Therefore, in addition to their good and wholesome instructions, parents should teach their children, cautiously to avoid, as far as possible, all vicious, profane company.

Presenting to their view, on the one hand, the awful consequences of wicked behaviour; and on the other, the very happy consequences of virtue and piety.

If children mingle, and have familiar intercourse with the openly vicious, their parental instruction, though ever so wisely calculated, and judiciously enforced, is liable to be attended with but little of that happy fruit which we might otherwise reasonably expect.

In order, therefore, that parents may secure the happy fruits of their pious endeavours to lead their children "in the way in which they should go;" they must strive to keep them from such society and connexions; at least, as far as may consist with reason, and the situation of things: endeavouring mean while, to inspire the minds of their children with more laudable motives, and to animate them in more virtuous conduct.

Such is the situation of things, and such the corruption of manners, at the present day, that



parent's prospects must be very gloomy and precarious, with respect to their obtaining very great influence with their children, when endeavouring to lead them in those virtuous ways in which they should go.

But parents should learn the important lesson taught in inspiration, not to be "weary in well-doing," remembering that in "due season, we shall reap if we faint not."

They should recollect also the memorable lesson of our inspired author, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this, or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

It is sufficient for us, that we faithfully discharge those duties incumbent on us; and commit the event to the Lord.

To give efficacy and success to our exertions in training up our children, does not fall within our province—The Apostle Paul says, "neither he that planteth is any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Leaving these few observations for parent's enlargement at discretion—We now pass to notice some of those things in which children should be taught respecting their Maker.

Instruction in divine things, may be unbounded.—Revelation is the only source of knowledge in

divinity; and, the study of this will be deeply interesting, not only through the whole of the present life; but for ever.

It is not the design of the present subject, to go into particulars in this most extensive field; but only to mention some general things which parents may improve in their leisure hours with their children; and thereby lay a foundation for their children, to improve, and increase in this important science, as they advance in years, and capacity.

One great evil attending instruction of this kind, in a more general way, is want of method.

If children, when first forming their ideas, of any object, have not proper method observed in their instruction, their ideas are ever liable to be indistinct and confused; and a profitable proficiency in future, will ever be attended with difficulty; because the same confusedness of thought will attend them. *But, where children are at first taught to think systematically, on subjects, and their first ideas are clear, definite, and distinct, and ample foundation is laid for an easy, and profitable improvement, in future.*

For the improvement of parents, when instructing their children in divine subjects, the following thoughts are presented, and in the following arrangement.

1. The character of God—The existence of a supreme being is the foundation of all religion whether natural, or revealed—The knowledge, therefore, of



his character, must be an object of the first magnitude in divine science—Children, having commenced a probation for an endless state of existence, very early become interested in a true knowledge of God—All the properties, and perfections of the divine character are set forth in the sacred scriptures. By having resource to them parents may represent them in the view of their children; and in that familiar, easy way, that their children, even while very young, may receive some just views and apprehensions of them.

For instance—They may represent God's mighty power, by the works of his hand—Visible creation displays the power of God—They may, also, represent, to their children, the omniscience of God; that all things are perfectly well known to him; and that no secret thing can be hid from his eye. They may represent his omnipresence; that he is really in every place; though no mortal eye can see him; and that all space is filled with his presence—And also, that he is the great creator, and the constant preserver of all things—that he is an ever living, and unchangeable being.

Parents should also present to the view of their children, the holiness of God: that he is always governed by good and benevolent motives; and that all sin and wickedness is perfectly displeasing, and hateful in his sight—that he is perfectly faithful to his word; and just in all his ways. They may also bring into the view of their children, the merciful,

and gracious disposition of God towards the children of men; observing due care, to let them understand that his justice must be supported, and that he will never shew mercy at the sacrifice of it: and for this reason, he could not justify sinners, without an atonement.

In conversing on the divine character, parents will find a very large field open—an extensive subject for profitable conversation, and instruction—They will, of course, be led to take some view of his government, and dominion; together with the latitude and extent of it; noticing, also, the propriety, and fitness attending his administrations.

## 2. The character of man.

This, as an object separately viewed, is comparatively, of small importance—Man, in himself considered, is but a worthless creature—Still, the character of man, when viewed in connexion with the important scenes of futurity, is not an object of smallest importance; but holds a rank among the first doctrines of divinity.

There are, in this view of the subject, but few things of greater importance, for us to understand.

—Parents would, therefore, do well to give their children very clear, and distinct ideas upon this subject.

In treating on this, they will very naturally be led to inform their children respecting the original state of man, when he was in the image of his maker perfectly free from sin, and guilt—And from this



they will pass on, to point out the character of man, in his fallen state; that state which has been peculiar to us all.

And in this, wisdom would direct, that they should not daub with untempered mortar, nor, flatter pride by representing man as possessing inherent, personal righteousness; but as do the scriptures, that man "is gone astray from God," become "alienated," from God, that "there is none good," that they are "enemies by wicked works," that they are "dead in trespasses and sins," that they are "children of wrath," and under a righteous sentence to eternal death.

There are, not a few in our day, as well as in past ages, who insinuate that men have not wholly lost the moral image of God; but that there is still remaining goodness of heart, which only needs cultivation and improvement, in order that they become acceptable in the sight of God—But this is a doctrine by no means friendly to the gospel scheme of grace; nor is it more so to the happiness of souls: for "the whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."

The doctrine of human, and total depravity should be taught, and early riveted in the minds of children, that they may grow up in the belief of it; and thence be led to flee from the wrath to come; and lay hold on eternal life.

The character of man, as a depraved creature, being taught and well understood, will lead the way to shew,

3. The necessity of a mediator; and to point out his character.

The necessity of a mediator can be shown upon no other ground, or principle than this; that man is in a totally lost, and ruined situation—This idea being clearly ascertained, the necessity of a mediator will appear of course.

Consequently the necessity of a mediator can, in no way, be painted in a more sensible view, than by a lively description of the true state of man in his fallen state.

After shewing, therefore, the true foundation on which the interposition of a mediator appears absolutely necessary to the salvation and happiness of men, it will be very suitable, and proper, that parents pursue the subject relative to a mediator; and point out his true character so far as may be to the clear understanding of their children—And in doing this, it will not escape them to represent him in his two natures, human, and divine; both united in one person—Agreeably to the scriptural account, they may shew, that he is really man, possessing all human properties, excepting those which are sinful. And, also, that he is really God, possessing all divine perfections.

In this way, they may shew how the sacrifice of Christ, or the offering which he made of himself, became infinitely meritorious—The humanity of Christ only suffered; but the person was clothed with divinity; and this sanctified the offering.



Christ is also to be represented as being one with the father, in spirit and sentiment; "I and my father are one;" that he is no less a sovereign than is his father; that he is no less inclined to execute justice; nor more inclined to shew mercy than his father; that the moral law, which by some is thought rigid, is no less an expression of his, than of his father's will.

As most important instruction, parents may hold up to view the character and example of Christ. This presents a most complete pattern of duty and true religion.

4. Parents may also teach their children something of the office and work of the holy spirit.

But that this may appear consistent, and in that way become profitable, it will be necessary that clear ideas previously be established respecting the human depravity.—If the human heart be not totally lost to all good and holiness, there will be no need of a thorough change by the power of the spirit; but if men be wholly dead to all true virtue, there will then appear a propriety in the scriptural representation that we must be born, or changed in the temper of our hearts by the power of the spirit. Such kind of instruction, on that ground and principle, will appear consistent.

Children may be taught, that it is the holy spirit who sanctifies, guides, and comforts good people in this world; and prepares for greater happiness in the world to come.—Here parents may take an occasion to teach their children the nature of regeneration; in

what it consists; that it consists essentially in a change of temper, from enmity to the love of God; and not in the alteration of natural faculties.—They may also hold up to view the necessity of this change of heart, or temper, in order to enter into future life; for, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

5. The nature of faith, repentance, and the other Christian graces.

The Christian graces are very liable to be misapprehended; and therefore people of all ages, and circumstances, are, in the scriptures, exhorted carefully to examine, and keep a close watch over themselves.

For the same reason it is of importance that children should early be taught the distinguishing properties of these graces.—Let children be taught the distinction between a mere speculation or conviction of the understanding, and that *faith* "which worketh by love;" which carries in it a delight in the important truth believed.

Let them also be taught the difference between that repentance which Judas exercised, and that "which is unto salvation, not to be repented of;" or between a sorrow for our wicked conduct, which arises from a view of shame or punishment to which we have exposed ourselves; and that sorrow which arises from a genuine hatred for sin.

Let them be taught the difference between benevolent love to our fellow creatures; and that selfish-



ness which leads men to love those who love them. The difference also between a genuine submission, patience, and resignation to the divine will, and a careless indifference—In this way, children will be more liable to receive conviction from the truth; and less liable to deception; and to be carried away with errors and delusions.

6. Parents should give their children instruction relative to the general judgment.

This is a most important scene; and in which every son and daughter of Adam are interested; "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

The great end and design of this most important scene, together with the endless consequences, may afford a copious, and very interesting theme for instruction.

As one of the most powerful motives to a virtuous and pious life, they may bring into view, as the reward of the righteous, the happiness of heaven; which are beyond the power of language to describe, and in duration, without end—On the other hand, as a terror to evil ways, they may also bring into view, the pains of the wicked in hell, as the due reward of their wickedness; which in measure will be as great as is the happiness of the righteous; and interminable in duration.

In the distribution of these different rewards, will God display the righteousness of his character for ever.

In this connexion therefore—

7. Parents should teach their children the evil of sin. How it tends to confusion here; and fills the world with disorder. How inexpressibly displeasing it is in the sight of God; and how it leads to complete misery and wretchedness in the world to come—And

8. The indispensable obligation under which they are laid, as rational creatures, to love and serve God.

Let them be informed that God hath made all things for himself; and that the great end of their existence is that they should serve him; and, therefore, that in every instance in which they are gratifying themselves in the service of sin, they are robbing God of his right.

Let them be early taught that the sabbath is the time which God hath set apart, and challenges for his own particular use and service; and therefore, that they should respect and reverence it as such; that they should neither pursue their own vain gratifications, nor secular employments on the Lord's day; but keep it holy unto him, devoting themselves to his particular service in divine things.

Let them be taught the propriety and practice of divine worship in the instituted ways, public and private.

A view of our absolute dependence on our maker, for all things, cannot avoid discovering the propriety of his receiving homage, and worship from those of every age, who are capable of any just knowledge of him and his ways.



Children may therefore, with propriety, be taught not only the duty of attending public and family worship; but also the duty of private devotion.

They should be taught, in early life, to seek, and cry unto the Lord, that the Lord may hearken unto them; pardon their sins; and lead them in the pathway of life. It is not sufficient, that they formally join with others who worship in public, and in family.

—They must learn to seek for themselves; and whenever they are capable of understanding their own need they are also capable of seeking for help.

9. Children should be taught, both by precept, and example, that religion is the one thing needful; and that it should be the great and principle business of life—That we were not made for ourselves but to answer the great and wise purposes of our creator; and that to love mercy, do justly, and to walk humbly with our God, is what he requires of us.

And this comprises the sum, and essence of true religion.

How beautiful would be the prospect, if we might find parents in general, faithfully discharging their duty, in training up and instructing their children, in the great and important things of true religion; and their children, at the same time, cordially embracing the pious instructions of their parents; and directing their feet into those beautiful paths which lead to the New Jerusalem?

This would afford sweet consolation to every pious soul.

The present subject suffers us to name but a very few, out of the almost innumerable topics which might be mentioned, for the profitable instruction of children.—These few are most respectfully presented to parents of all descriptions; and if any happy consequences should be found resulting from them, may God have all the praise.



## DISCOURSE V.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXII. VERSE 6.

*Train up a Child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

HAVING in the foregoing discourses upon this subject, taken notice of some things pertaining to the Government, Example, and Instruction, which are comprised in parental duty. We now proceed agreeably to proposal, in further pursuing the subject.

2. To inquire into the manner proper for parents to communicate instruction to their children.

In ancient day, the only method for communicating instruction, was by word of mouth—The family of Israel, on their first receiving the written Law of God, had but one copy committed to their hands; and this continued to be their case, during many generations;—It was, therefore, an ordinance in Israel, that, at stated seasons, all the people, men, women, and children, should be assembled; and

the Law read in their audience—See DEUT. 31. 11. 13. “When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this Law before all Israel, in their hearing—Gather the people together, men, women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this Law; and that their children which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whether ye go over Jordan to possess it.”

From that time to this, things have been conspiring, though in very moderate advance, to facilitate the education of youth—But until the latter part of the fourteenth century, very great difficulties attended every kind of education, in comparison with those of the present day—Until about that time, the art of printing had not been brought into use; consequently all writings were necessarily performed with pen, or pencil; which of course rendered all kinds of books, not only, very scarce; but also very expensive.\*

This must render a progress in education very difficult in those ages, and times.

\* Before the discovery of printing, a copy of the Bible has been said to be sold from two hundred to one thousand Dollars: and the rational presumption is, that other books then extant, were sold at a proportionable rate.



But these are not the labouring difficulties of the age in which a lot is cast unto us.

Through the great blessing of a kind providence, we may be furnished, not only with the Bible; but also, with a good variety of other books, useful for our improvement; and at a very moderate rate.—And, in addition to this, people of our age and situation, are liberated from an endless train of other embarrassments, under which ages past have laboured.—And, for the use of this age and situation, is the present subject designed.

Being furnished with the necessaries for instruction the prospect would seem to promise much proficiency in the most useful science.—The situation and circumstances of most people in this happy age; and, especially, in this enlightened part of the world; are peculiarly calculated to render the education and instruction of children very easy.

Societies, or institutions, of different magnitude, are with much convenience, and to great advantage established among us for instruction in the various useful branches of science.

In these different institutions, our youth may receive instructions from the first use of letters to a good degree of knowledge in the highest branches of human literature.

This must procure a very great abridgement of that labour and expence, with which a similar education, must otherwise of necessity be attended.

In institutions for instruction, whether in the higher or lower branches of literature, wisdom would

direct that particular attention be paid, not only to the acquired accomplishments; but also, to the morals of the instructor.

It must be very unhappy for children, if the fountain be corrupt from which they draw their first maxims in knowledge.

So far, therefore, as parents may have influence in the appointment of those to whom the instruction of their children is to be committed; it stands them in hand, to seek for those to instruct, who would be likely to inspire the minds of their children, with virtuous; and not perverse sentiments.

But to commit children to such schools, or institutions, for instruction; although it may be a great assistant; yet does not comprise the whole of parent's duty in their education.—The greatness of their advantages does not diminish, but rather increase, their obligation to faithfulness.

We proceed, therefore, agreeably to the design of this branch of the subject; to point out some few things, more particularly respecting the manner of parental instruction.—And,

1. it is not only incumbent on parents that they teach their children the use of letters as a foundation for future improvement; but also that they use their best efforts in leading them to an understanding of that which by means of letters, they have received.—When children are very young, and their capacities small, their instruction must be made very plain,



and easy, in order that they may understand, and receive the designed benefit.

Any instruction, which is not understood, and digested, is of no use.

This is, therefore, one of the ways, or methods, by which parents are to communicate instruction to their children.

As children increase in understanding and capacity their instructions should be apportioned to their capacity.—Children are daily surrounded with lessons of instruction; and it becomes parents in their easy, and familiar way to render intelligible those lessons, that their children may be profited.

When children are first able to read the scriptures; by some plain, and familiar explanation from parents, they may receive great advantage—And when children are favoured with hearing public preaching, by being habituated to give some account, to their parents, respecting the sermon; and to receive their parent's remarks, and instructions; not only their memories may be strengthened; but their understanding much increased. And, parents, while thus assisting their children, may derive great advantage to themselves.

2. This parental duty of instructing children is to be attended with much care, and diligence—It is to become a principle, and daily object of attention.

The inspired apostle Paul, when speaking to this subject, and giving direction to parents respecting

their children, says, "Bring them up in the nurture, and admonition of the Lord."

The proper meaning of this is, 'according to the institution, and admonition of the Lord'—In order, then, that we fully understand the design of inspiration in this instance, it will be needful that we have recourse to this *institution*—The sum of this, we have recorded in DEUT. vi. 6, 7. "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

From this *institution*, it appears, that God considers the due instruction of children as an object which demands the unremitting attention of their parents, from day to day, even as their daily food.

The care of supporting children, and providing for all their necessities, is very great; but that of their instruction is much greater; and however injurious, or abusive, a neglect of the former may appear; the neglect of the latter will be much the most hurtful, and destructive.

3. The instruction of children is not the business of a few months, or years only; but is to be perpetuated during the time while they are under parental care, and control—The injunction in the text is, "Train up a child."—This evidently carries the idea that the parental functions are to be performed until



the child arrives to manhood. The gospel injunction is to the same purport—" *But bring them up.*"—A child cannot rightfully be said to be *trained*, or *brought up*, until he has arrived to a state of maturity; or to manhood. And during his minority, or childhood, it appears to have been the design of Providence that he should be under the guidance, and control of his parents; and consequently, that during that term, the parental duty should be continued.

As the child increases in years, and mental abilities, the field is proportionably extended for parental instruction to become useful.—It is, therefore, becoming parents to improve their increasing opportunities, and while advantages are in their hands, not to slacken their pace, but rather double their diligence in the improvement of all proper means for the present, and future felicity of their children: whose well being and happiness, temporal and spiritual, so much depend on the faithful discharge of their duty in training them up.

But, we proceed, agreeably to proposal—

II. To offer some inducements to a faithful discharge of this interesting duty.

1. The time in which parents are indulged with this opportunity is but very short. If children are not untimely taken away, which is the lot of many; the season for their instruction, if improved in the best manner, is but just sufficient to lay a foundation for a future improvement in life.—Childhood may

well be considered the seed time which if neglected the future harvest must fail. If, therefore, there be any thing very interesting in a good education, either in relation to this life, or to futurity; it must appear of importance that this short period be diligently improved in such ways as shall be most contributive to the child's present good, and future felicity.

Childhood is a period of life, in a variety of respects, the best calculated for instruction.—And if a foundation for improvement be not laid in this period, it is very seldom that much progress is afterwards made.—If this season, therefore, be lost, it is generally lost for life.

Just premising these few things, let it be observed.

2. If parents neglect this important duty of rightly training up their children, they generally deprive themselves of that comfort and satisfaction, in them, which they might otherwise reasonably expect.

There are but very few parents so entirely devoid of all rational feeling as not to receive some satisfaction in seeing their children conduct agreeably; and fender themselves respectable in life. With most parents, this is one of their greatest comforts in life, when enjoyed; and the opposite, one of their greatest trials.—The pious have no greater earthly comfort than to find their children disposed to piety; and early walking in the pleasant, and beautiful paths of religion.



But upon what ground are these desirable things to be expected in children?—If parents neglect their duty in training them up in the way in which they should go, they have no right to expect from them, exhibitions of religion, or even common civility.—Nothing more is rationally to be expected from our children, than from the children of heathen, on any other ground than that of their being better instructed, and better trained up.

If children through the neglect of their parents, should become obstinate, vicious, and scandalous; it must afford grief, and sorrow to their parents: and parents must have this as an aggravating reflection that this is but the fruit of their unfaithfulness in training up, and properly instructing them. Faithfulness in parents in the discharge of this important and interesting duty in training up children, is the only rational ground on which they may expect to receive comfort, and satisfaction, in view of their pleasing, and virtuous behaviour.

This consideration then, if duty weighed must operate as an inducement to faithful exertion.

3. The neglect of this important duty tends to make bad members of society. Neither an ignorant, nor an ungovernable person is, ordinarily, a very good member of any society, whether larger, or smaller.

Ignorance renders person's views contracted; and prevents their understanding wherein the real good and interest of society consists: and, in this

way, prevents their usefulness—And an ungovernable temper, is always contributive to contention, and discord.—Wherever this temper is prevalent, the peace and tranquility of society is interrupted: without which but very little happiness can be enjoyed.

The neglect of parental duty, in this view, serves to deprive the community of that usefulness from its members: and satisfaction in their society, which might otherwise be expected; and which faithfulness would insure.

This consideration, therefore, is weighty, in proportion, as the public peace and tranquility is important, and interesting.

4. A neglect of this duty, tends to the great injury of religion.

Ignorance is directly calculated to support enthusiasm, and delusion.—Without resting dependence on recent instances, for the support of this idea, which, even in this enlightened age, are but too numerous; we may turn our attention to that period commonly called the *dark ages*; where ample testimony will readily occur.

During the term of about ten or twelve hundred years before the commencement of the Lutheran and Calvinistic reformation, the ecclesiastical power falling into the hands of the Roman Pontiff; by his influence, and the influence of his clergy, the means of information were greatly confined; the populace, with respect to spiritual things, were in great igno-



rance. The consequence is, that an history of the state of religion, during that term is an history of the greatest confusion, enthusiasm, and spiritual delusion, of which any part of the enlightened world has ever exhibited specimen.—In proportion, however, as ignorance has abounded, similar effects have prevailed in other parts, and ages of the world.

Nothing, indeed, can render persons a more easy prey to the delusive ensnarements of a subtle adversary than the want of proper information, in connexion with a depraved heart.

In this situation, men may easily be lead about by him, as captives at will.—They may be lead to embrace any kind of delusive errors, and heresy: and pursue them with a zeal, even superiour to the demands of piety itself.—And, by embracing and pursuing errors with such a warmth of zeal, they may more essentially wound the cause of true religion, than by the most spirited opposition.

If, then, the preservation of order, and regularity in the Christian world; and the suppression of confused enthusiasm, and blind delusion, be desirable objects; it must, in this view, appear to be of importance, that parents take pains in training up, and instructing their children: that they may be prepared to act a useful part, not only in the civil, but also, in the religious world.

5 A neglect of this duty towards children tends not only to the injury of religion in general, as before pointed out; but has a direct tendency to the endless ruin of their immortal souls.

He who hath wrought salvation for our race, hath also established the proper means for our attaining it.—And, one principle, and very essential means to this purpose, is information.—Without this, the gospel salvation, could be of no more advantage to us than to the most benighted heathen.

It belongs to parents, to teach their children those things which pertain to their salvation; and to impress them upon their minds both by precept, and example.—In this way, they may be the means of their salvation. But, if this be neglected, children are left in an ignorant, stupid state, but little bettered by the light of revelation. In this situation, being under no restraints, they are liable to follow the dictate of every fleshly appetite: plunging themselves deeper and deeper into sin; and wickedness; and rendering themselves more fit vessels for wrath and destruction.

But their own destruction, and misery, is not the only evil here depending; such persons are liable, by their vicious examples, to have influence on others; and be the instruments of leading them in the same paths of iniquity, to destruction, with themselves.

If these, and such like evils, may, in any measure or degree, be remedied by a faithful discharge of parental duty, what stronger inducements, can be needful, with those parents, who possess any regard for their children's happiness, or the happiness of others?—A faithful discharge of duty towards



children, in rightly training them up, is the only advantage of which parents can avail themselves, for preventing the forecited evils. And reason, observation, and the sacred scriptures, all conspire, to present parents with encouragement for vigorous exertions.

Furthermore—

6. If the parents be found unfaithful, and the child perish through his neglect, the blood will be required at the parent's hand in the great day of judgment. 'This is a rich intrustment committed to parents: for which they must give an account to him who hath intrusted them.—In the great day of accounts, men must answer for every part of their stewardship. And if the watchmen, whose office it is to teach the people their dangerous situation, point out the way of escape, and warn them to flee from the wrath to come, shall be accountable for the souls which perish through their neglect: of how much sorer judgment, suppose ye, that parents shall be thought worthy, if they shall be found negligent in the important duty of training up their dear children, who are bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, and the interest of whose immortal souls is committed to their particular care and trust?

Their children will rise up in judgment against them, testify to their unfaithfulness, and become swift witnesses against them.—How will parents then endure this cutting thought, that their neglects in life have brought these dear objects of their former at-

fections to this state of endless wretchedness, wo, and torment.

But, at how great distance soever we may be putting these things, they will soon be solemn realities; "*for we must all stand before the bar of Christ.*"

In this view of the subject, it must appear that whosoever hath understandingly any real regard for his own good, the good of the public, the promotion of religion, the present and future happiness of his children, or the glory of God, cannot want for rational arguments or inducements to the discharge of that important duty, which, as a parent, he owes to his beloved offspring.

### IMPROVEMENT.

Our subject teaches us—

I. That a parent acts in a very important capacity. Much is depending on his conduct in this relation.

We usually estimate the importance of characters by the consequences attending their conduct. For instance, we generally conceive, that the commander in chief of an army acts in an important capacity: because the interest of his country much depends on his good or ill conduct in that capacity. In like manner and for the same reason, do we judge respecting a foreign Minister, a Governor, a President, and every other public character. Their characters in our view, are important in proportion to the interest depending on their conduct.

If this be a just mode of estimating character, the present observation, in view of the subject must ap-



pear to be pertinent. On the conduct of a parent, acting in that capacity, are depending, not merely the temporal felicity of individuals and the peace of society, but the peace and well being of religion here, and the eternal well being of souls hereafter. How important then, is this capacity, and how great the trust! "Who then is sufficient for these things?"—May every one when discovering his imperfection, strive earnestly for a reformation and amendment.

II. Our subject, when viewed in connexion with general observation, shews that there is great deficiency at the present day, in the three principal things comprised in rightly training up children.

The support of family government and due subordination among children, which has, in time past, been thought essential to good order and the peace of community, and which has been enjoined as a parental duty of divine appointment, is now more generally rejected as a species of rigid sovereignty unbecoming the spirit and genius of a free, independant people; and as calculated to stupify the senses, and destroy the spirit of laudable ambition in children.

The example also of family religion and worship, which in the days of the prophets and apostles, has been enjoined as incumbent duty, and which by the pious fathers has been holden sacred, is, in these days of greater light, found to be the mere fruit of puritanic zeal, or superstitious tradition, not at all needful to future happiness, and as very unbecoming people of taste and fashion.

Family instruction is also, in too many instances, sharing the same unhappy fate—Children are generally taught some things respecting the present life, how to appear in company, and how to procure a subsistence.

But what are they taught by their parents, either in precept or example respecting the life to come? Are not most children, at this day, always deprived of those pious dissertations, upon the great things of futurity, which God has enjoined as the daily task for parents?

If not, it might well be inquired, as did Samuel, anciently, "What meaneth then this bleating of the Sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the Oxen which I hear," or whence is so great ignorance among the children of our day, respecting religion and piety?

Observation presents glaring testimony of the general neglect of parents in training up their children in the way they should go. And awful and very threatening are the consequences. Many are enquiring, 'whence is our increase of viciousness, and corruption of manners?' And but few seem to discover the radical cause. This when found, will be found fostered in individual families.

III. Our subject teaches us where to look for one of the principal sources of the prevalent evils in the world.

On reflection, we find very great evils prevailing.

It is not uncommon, at this day, to find convulsions and eruptions in civil communities whether larger or smaller.



Contentions and divisions also are prevalent in the religious world.—That part of the world which is called the Christian, or religious part, is divided and subdivided into almost innumerable parts—Heresies and delusions of all kinds are prevailing; and the peace and tranquility of the true church is beset on every side.

And in addition to this—

There is a general neglect and inattention paid to spiritual things. Hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and stupidity of conscience are a general calamity. And if any enquire, 'what is the source of the whole?'—The answer is ready at hand.

'The first seeds of all these poisonous plants, were sown in the young minds of children, while in a family state, under parental control. From that they have grown and spread, until the whole community is infected.'

IV. Our subject leads us to see, where a reformation must begin, in order to become generally prevalent.

By divine grace we see and hear, at times, of some small reformations. But because the proper foundation has not been laid, they prevail but little.—The effect is like that of seed, falling on ground unprepared. There may be in this case, now and then, a grain which may take root, grow, and bring forth some fruit. But in order to expect a crop on rational principles, the ground must be prepared. Otherwise, the obstructions will prove fatal.

So in the case under consideration. If the seed of divine grace be sown; or the spirit operate to awaken and convince any number of people; and there has been no antecedent preparation, by informing the understanding and instructing the mind, wherein religion consists, and what are the properties of it; the subjects of such awakening and conviction are liable, under the influence of the adversary, to imbibe every error and delusion for true religion.—They may be lead with ease, to believe that zeal is the best evidence of true piety; that the dictates of the spirit are the standard of truth, in preference to the word; that certain impressions made upon the mind, at some particular time, is more evidential of true conversion, than a life of Christian obedience; and that information and knowledge of any other kind than that which is immediately communicated from the spirit, is not an assistant to a Christian's growth in grace; but rather an obstruction.

With these and a few such like maxims, which are but the mere fruits of ignorance, religion has, in many instances, been lead such a chase that the world has been lead to censure it, as the mere production of a deluded brain; and the humble, pious Christian, by times to doubt.

And some of these unlucky fruits, for want of better information, are very frequently attendants on our religious reformations. By these, like weeds and grass among grain, true religion is obstructed: and our harvests are but very light. In order that this



peculiar evil may be remedied, there must be family reformation—Some foundation must *there* be laid, for persons when awakened, to act like rational beings ; and not like men of deranged minds.

Children must be taught what is religion ; and what are its properties ; and how it affects the conduct of men—Until some reformation of this kind shall take place in families, it is reasonable to expect that the adversary will avail himself of such kinds of counterfeit religion, to the great prejudice of true piety and godliness.

V. Our subject points out the reason why many people receive no more instruction and benefit under preaching—The foundation for their improvement has not been laid in their youthful minds, as it ought to have been. They have no system in their minds ; and therefore, can profit but very little from what they hear. Should a speaker deliver a discourse upon agriculture or the mechanical arts, with which people in general are familiarly acquainted ; they would receive, and understand all the instruction communicated—But should there be ever so ingenious a discourse, delivered upon astronomy or chemistry ; in which people in general have not been informed ; they would receive but very little if any information—The reason is, they have not a foundation laid in their own minds, by foregoing information, for a profitable improvement—A man who had before been instructed, and studied these subjects, would easily apprehend, and improve upon every idea suggested—Just so is it, with respect to

every other science, and with respect to the subject of divinity ; if persons were taught it as familiarly as their secular concerns, a discourse upon that subject, if treated plainly, would be as easily understood, and retained, as a discourse upon any other subject in life.

But parents neglecting this important duty of instructing their children in these things ; it is not uncommon that persons in adult age, and who appear to be knowing in the common concerns of life, when hearing a plain, and regular sermon, can scarcely give information what were the leading thoughts in it—If they can give the text, it is generally thought they do very well—This is frequently credited to a want of memory : but instead of that, it is uniformly owing either to intolerable inattention, or a want of antecedent instruction.—This, as one instance, then, shews what children may loose through their parent's neglect.

VI. Our subject may serve to bring into our remembrance, in some measure at least, what is the import of parent's engagement, when they dedicate their children in the ordinance of Baptism.

The giving up of our children in baptism, doubtless, implies an engagement to train them up for God, agreeably to his institution—So far, therefore, as this subject goes towards informing us how children are to be trained up, so far, also, it goes, to shew us the import of our engagement in dedication.



Baptizing children is not the performing, but the engaging to perform, the duties pertaining to their being trained up.

In this view of the subject, we may be led by examination, to see how far we go in fulfilling our sacred vows which we make at the dedication of our children—We then solemnly engage to train them up for God, in the way in which they should go.

This may, also, teach those people their inconsistency, who are much more anxious to dedicate, than to train up their children, for God, in the faithful discharge of their duty towards them.

If this subject were rightly understood, parents would not be so over anxious, as some are, to dedicate their children in this ordinance; unless it were from a pious determination to bring them up agreeably to their solemn vows.

VII. This subject, so far as it is just, teaches parents what is their duty towards their children.

It now remains that they improve upon it, by a cheerful, and thorough compliance with their duty.

The present day, puts on an aspect very gloomy; and a countenance which threatens destruction, not only to religion, and piety in general; but even to common morality, and the civil peace—"The devil is come down unto us, having great wrath."—The standard of iniquity is erected.—The advocates of it swarm around, like the devouring locusts; or the

Egyptian flies in multitudes—Our Christian republic is invaded on every side: and even the civil empire is made to tremble—So that the contemplative, pious mind is ready to cry out with the latin orator "O, tempora; O, mores."

But here let us pause a moment; and inquire from what source these evils all proceed?—A depraved, corrupt heart, is doubtless, at the bottom—But has not our subject disclosed the principle avenues through which these malignant streams issue forth?

The human heart is liable to be turned into different channels, as means, and motives are improved: and childhood is the principal season for establishing habits for life—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Vicious habits are, also, established by vicious instructions.

Although it be not in the power of parents, to change the temper of their children's hearts; still, it is, in a very great measure, in their power, by a faithful discharge of their duty, to fix, and establish the morals of the rising generation—Not, however, that it is in the power of an individual parent to stem the tide of a corrupt community. But it is in the power of parents at large, by a joint influence, to regulate the common current. To this end, every individual must reform one. And as far as this prevails, and becomes general, a pleasing, and



promising prospect, will begin to dawn, in the moral world.

In order to remedy any evil, it is always best to take it at the root. And as all our spreading, and threatening evils have their principal seat in families, it is best that a reformation should there begin.

Now if parents have any regard for the glory of God; for the interest, and prosperity of religion; for the good of community; for the public peace; for the good, and happiness of their children; or, even for themselves; let them be persuaded to set about a reformation, in this important duty of training up, and rightly instructing their children—A reformation of this kind is the only ground on which any person can rationally expect to secure the fore-mentioned objects so very desirable.

Would parents engage this long neglected duty, with seriousness; and make it an object of attention, in proportion to its importance; there would be great reason to hope and expect, that divine grace would attend their pious, and prayerful exertions; that their children would become religious; and that consequences, extensively happy, would ensue.

But if parents, by reason of any foregoing neglects should find themselves under difficulty with respect to instructing their children methodically; they might do well to procure, as a kind of guide in the business, some small tracts; in which the leading doctrines of divinity are systemised, and comprised in short terms.

The Westminster assembly of divines' Catechism, has a very happy calculation to this purpose. Most of the leading doctrines of divinity, are therein brought to view, in very concise language—If parents would take this, or something similar, and explain those doctrines to their children, it might prove to be of eminent utility.

The principal design of this short system, it seems was, that it might be a kind of guide to parents, and instructors; and, as such, is a most excellent thing, however it is neglected, at the present day.

Parents should have a watchful eye, to the books falling into the hands of their children. And instead of furnishing them with novels, corrupt story books, and pieces calculated to viciate their sentiments and manners; should furnish them with pieces suited to improve their minds in useful knowledge; promote virtuous sentiments; and preserve their morals uncorrupted.

This important business demands our daily attention. "Thou shalt teach them unto thy children when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, when thou sittest in the house, and when thou walkest abroad."—Every parent has, or ought to have some leisure time which he may improve in giving some lessons of instruction—The sabbath in a special manner, before, and after public worship, should be improved in some useful instruction of our children. And some proper inquiries and remarks, relative



to the public instruction, might be very advantageous.

But, time would fail, to enlarge.

May we all be suitably animated to fidelity in this weighty, and momentous concern: and the influences of divine grace, ever attend our faithful exertions.

Amen.

## DISCOURSE VI.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. VI. VERSE 1.

*Children obey your Parents in the Lord; for this is right.*

**I**N this connexion, the apostle has been inculcating the principles of peace, and unanimity—To effect which, he urges the observance of the several relative duties; The duty of husbands towards their wives, and of wives towards their husbands; of parents towards their children, and of children towards their parents; of masters towards their servants, and of servants towards their masters.

The right observance of these relative duties, has a very extensive, and interesting influence, not only, upon the civil peace; but also upon the peace and prosperity of true religion.

Each branch of this copious field would afford ample subject, for lengthy dissertations.

But our text more immediately calls up our attention to the duties which children owe to their parents—Let us, then,

I. Examine into the duty of children in relation to their parents——And,



II. Offer some arguments to enforce the practice of such duties.

I. What are the duties which children owe to their parents.

He who hath given existence to our race hath in great wisdom established the different relations and capacities in which all the different persons may be called to act; and hath pointed out with great perspicuity, the duties pertaining to each relation, and capacity, in his sacred word; to which all men would do well to give diligent heed.

With respect to the duties which children owe to their parents, we notice the following things.

1. It is the duty of children to exercise a tender affection for their parents.—The exercise of benevolent love, towards all people, is an incumbent duty; but parents holding a different relation, a distinguished affection towards them, is due from children.—On this ground, and principle, we hear the following denunciations from the most High—*“And he that curseth (or revileth) his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death.”*—*“Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.”*—*“The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.”*

From these, and similar passages, it appears that every kind of neglectful treatment, and reviling language, shewn by children, to their parents, is pecul-

iarly offensive in the sight of God; and consequently that he expects, and requires of children, as duty, a certain kind of tenderness, in the treatment of parents peculiar to their relation.

And this is but a dictate of common sense as well as of divine revelation.—When we consider that children, are dependent on parents, under God, for their first existence; for their support, and protection, during the helpless period of their lives; and that the comforts of their present state, together with their means of information, and knowledge, are for the most part, if not wholly, to be ascribed to the tender care, and patronage of their parents; the simple light of nature cannot but shew that a distinguished affection, and tenderness of treatment, is due, from children to them.

This is, in a measure, perceived, and practised by the benighted tribes, who have never been favoured with the light of revelation for their guide.

2. It is a duty incumbent on children, that they honour, and reverence their parents.

God has seen fit to institute, and appoint, that persons in certain capacities should receive particular tokens of esteem, and respect, on the account of the office in which they are called to act.—Thus the apostle Paul, when enjoining the important duty of submission to the civil authority; and a reverential fear of the ruler, says *“For he is the minister of God for good to thee.”*—And, when speaking of



ministers, he directs that they be esteemed very highly in love for their *work's sake*.

Parents are constituted the guardians, teachers, and governors of their children—And, for their office's sake, children are bound to treat them with distinguished tokens of honour, and reverence—In the moral law, it is enjoined “*Honour thy father, and thy mother ; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*”

The same is quoted in the New-Testament; and applied to those of all nations, and circumstances—God says by his propheth Malachi, “*A son honoureth his Father.*”

The apostle who wrote to the Hebrews, says, “*We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence.*”

This honour, and reverence, due from children to parents, may be expressed in different ways—it may be expressed in words; and in actions: both which should be improved by children, in the performance of this important part of their duty towards their parents.

3. Obedience to parental commands as a duty incumbent on children. This is abundantly inculcated in the scriptures—Col. iii. 20. “*Children obey your parents in all things.*”

This is the great thing enjoined in the text.—We need not, therefore, multiply scriptures, in support of the idea; but rather inquire into the latitude and extent of it.—Parents are liable to be actuated by

vicious motives; and to command their children to perform that which would imply a violation of the divine precept—The question, therefore, is, how far this injunction, ‘to obey parents,’ extends.

The apostles have given a happy solution of this question, in the following words, “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*”—Whenever it shall be the case that the commands of any man shall stand in opposition to the commands of God; and a compliance with one implies a violation of the other: such commands of men must submit to the commands of God.—God has never committed that authority to man by which his own might be superseded. It is of divine appointment that the precepts of earthly rulers, should be obeyed, by their subjects. But when the precepts of rulers counteract the divine commands; such precepts become no longer binding on the subjects. This was the very case with the apostles. The commands of their civil rulers, and the commands of God, were in opposition to each other.—And, in this situation, they did not hesitate to determine that they “*ought to obey God rather than men.*”

A very similar instance occurred in more ancient day—In the days of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, a royal mandate went out that all people should worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar had made. But Shadrac, Meshack, and Abednego, from respect to the commandments of their God, openly refused a compliance with this impious precept. And



though they were cast into the fire furnace, God protected and defended them from harm, in testimony of his approbating their faithfulness to his commands.

Daniel, also, in a similar case, in the reign of Darius, king of Babylon, was cast into the den of Lions, for violating the king's commandment in worshipping the God of heaven.—He also, had the approbation of God in his refusal to obey the king's commandment.

These, and such like instances, may serve to illustrate the case before us—It is the divine will, and appointment, that children obey parents. But should a case occur in which a parent should command his child to worship an image, to cheat, lie, steal, or rob,—such command would not be binding on the child. “He ought rather to obey God than men.” But, children are bound in all instances to obey their parents, where such acts of obedience do not imply a violation of some divine rule. It does not belong to children to dispute the propriety of this, or the other command, of their parents.—They are not to be the judges of propriety, or conveniences.—If they should conceive that any measure proposed by a parent, was improper, and unsuitable, it might not, in such a case, be amiss for them with becoming submission, to offer what light they were able on the subject.—The final solution of the business, must then rest with the parent; and his commands must be obeyed: unless the foregoing exception should apply.

In every community, whether larger or smaller, there must be some legislature, or head: and, in order to the peace and quietude of such community, there must be subordination, in the subjects, to general laws.

Every family is a little community, or commonwealth: and, the mode of government, in these communities, is not, like that of nations in general, left to the option and discretion of the body at large to determine; but is, like the government of Israel, anciently, of divine appointment. Parents are in union constituted, the head and legislature of this common body. It is, also, of divine appointment, that children be subject, and obedient to the laws proceeding from this established board.

Children, therefore, cannot violate the commands of their parents, without a direct violation of divine institution; unless as before noticed, parental commands, are in opposition to the divine.

It is enjoined on parents that they command, and govern their children. It must of course, be incumbent on children, to submit to such government, and command. And there is no community in which subordination in the subjects is more important in proportion to the number concerned, than in a family. Disobedience, and insurrections, in families, not only destroy all peace and happiness in such families, but have an extensively pernicious influence on the community at large.

It, therefore, becomes parents, with wisdom to command their children; and with prudent, judicious



firmness, to execute their own government, and commands. It, also, becomes children, with conscientious fidelity, to render obedience unto parental commands, and government.

4. It appears to be duty incumbent on children, that they pay a candid and careful attention to parental instruction.

Is it a duty, incumbent on any, to minister instruction? this necessarily implies, that it is the duty of the instructed, carefully to receive, and judiciously to improve such instruction. Otherwise the best instructions may be totally neglected, or misimproved without any criminality on the part of the receiver.

Parents are constituted, not only the governors; but the instructors, also, of their children. They are commanded "to train them up in the way they should go," "to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and to teach them diligently the things of religion, and things which make for their future well being, and happiness.

This being the case; it must appear from the forementioned general principle, that it is the indispensable duty of children, diligently to hear, and faithfully to improve the pious instructions of parents. Hence we hear the following exhortations of scripture, "*My son, hear the instruction of thy father; and forsake not the law of thy mother.*"

"*Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father; and attend, to know understanding.*"

Children are bound to consider it a very great blessing, if they may be favoured with parents who will be faithful to them in giving them instruction, counsel, and advice, in the most interesting things. They are also bound to consider themselves as under the most sacred ties to receive and faithfully improve all the wholesome instructions, and pious counsels, of their parents ministered unto them.

5. Under certain circumstances, it may become the duty of children to minister unto the support of their parents. This will ever be a duty incumbent on children, when parents become needy, and providence hath put it within their power to assist them. These are instances not very frequent. It is generally expected that parents provide for the support of their children, and not children for parents. When the apostle Paul says, "the children ought not to lay up for the parents; but the parents for the children," most probably, he means, that this is the common course and expectation of the world; and not that children *ought not* to help their parents, if needy.

Parents who are in the possession of property, ought never to commit themselves to the mercy of their children, by putting their property wholly at their disposal; but with the greatest precaution, in the course of divine providence, they may become objects of charity, while it may be in the power of children to afford them support. In all such cases it becomes indispensably incumbent on children to minister to their support and comfort. The tables



must now be shifted—when children were dependent, and needy, it was parents duty to support and nourish them. And if it becomes the lot of parents to fall into a state of dependence and need; and children have it in their power to assist; reason would dictate, that one good turn should receive another; that children should now shew the same kindness towards their parents which in their needy state, they may have received from them.—This is the rule also, of the gospel! See 1 Tim. v. 4—*“But if any widow have children, or nephews, let them learn, first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God.”*

In allusion to the same duty the apostle says further—*“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”*

By *‘those of his own house,’* the apostle undoubtedly intends not only his children; but also, his needy parents, if any such he may have.—And the apostle represents, that those who shall refuse to shew kindness in such cases, not only conduct out of the Christian character; but even worse than heathen.—And such conduct may rightfully be considered as neither Christian nor human; but as unnatural, and savage.

Children should recollect, that such have been the anxieties, pains, and distresses, by parents endured for them, that they will be in no danger of going too far in shewing them kindness in return.

They should also remember, that duty of this kind faithfully performed, “is good, and acceptable before God.”

In this concise view of the subject, it appears very clear and evident, that it is incumbent on children, and duty requires, that they exercise a tender affection, and respectful regard for their parents—that they honour and reverence them—that they cheerfully obey all their rightful commands—that they carefully hear, and faithfully improve their good, and pious counsels and instructions;—and, if circumstances require, that they freely contribute for their support, and comfort in life.

We now proceed, agreeably to proposal,

II. To offer some arguments, with a view to enforce on children the practice of so reasonable duties.

I. Parents are the instrumental cause of their existence.

Our existence as rational beings, is a very great and rich blessing—And both reason, and revelation teach us that suitable acknowledgments should be made, not only to the great first cause of all our blessings; but also, to those of our fellow creatures, who have been leading instruments of our enjoying certain good.

On this principle, to return thanks to benefactors, appears rational.—On this principle, our Saviour says “render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar’s, and unto God, the things that are God’s.”



And on this principle, the apostle Paul says, "Render therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour."

Eminent deliverers, usually on this principle, receive peculiar honour and applauses from their country.—Since it has pleased God, in his wise constitution of things, to honour parents, by making them the leading instruments of children's existence, there appears a propriety, on the foregoing general principle, that children should render unto them, all that respect, honour, and reverence, which, as duty, is enjoined on them.

Their Creator merits their first honour and reverence: the next is due to their parents: unless however, by some very injudicious behaviour, or unrighteous conduct, they may have forfeited their right to such respect.

2. With respect to the propriety of children's rendering obedience to parental commands—Let it be observed, that the established system of family government is a wise constitution.

Such is the natural make, and construction of our race, that every combined body needs some rule, and order, for the support of peace and happiness in the body—And that system which God hath established for the government of families; and to which children are bound to submit, is, in preference to all others, most wisely and happily calculated: which may appear from the few following thoughts.

1. Children, for many reasons, are inadequate to the task of governing a family—And, if there were no other reasons, their want of experience and judgment, would prove an effectual objection.

2. There are no persons from abroad who could be equally well acquainted with the state, and circumstances of the family, as are parents; or who could equally well understand the make, situation, and temper of children who are the subjects of this government—And,

3. There are no persons from abroad, who would feel so deeply interested in the common good of the family as parents; or who would feel so tenderly concerned for the best good, and happiness of children.—Therefore,

4. It must appear that, of all persons in life, parents are the most suitable, to stand at the head of the family; and to hold the reins of government—It must appear also, very evident, that if any objections arise to this system of government, they must arise from a disposition, solely to be under no government, restraint, or control, of any kind.

This may shew children that their rights are not invaded by arbitrary despotic influence, in having a system of government imposed on them without their voice, or consent—For reason, and the light of nature teach the absolute necessity of some form of government in order to their peace, and highest good. The same reason teaches also, that, had they at any period of life, been at the forming or the adopting of a



system of government for themselves, their own interest could not have been established on a more permanent foundation.—It is not, however, intended by these observations, to insinuate, that this wise system of government is always executed with that wisdom, and judiciousness which might be wished, and expected, from rational beings; and especially enlightened men.

The best systems, or forms of government are liable, through the depravity of their executors, to be perverted, to very pernicious purposes.

This, like other governments, is doubtless, in too many instances sharing that unhappy fate.

3. As to the reasonableness that children should hear, and improve the counsels, and instructions of their parents; there is no need that arguments be used any more than to enforce the propriety that they should receive, and improve a certain sum of money, or any other donation. Instruction is a peculiar prize, or privilege put into their hands; and, if neglected, or misimproved, their's is the loss.

4. The propriety, and fitness, that children should contribute to the support of their parents, if needy, many things conspire to shew.

This would be but one of the spontaneous fruits of that tender regard which children are bound in reason, as well as by scripture rule, to exercise towards their parents.

This would, also, be but a natural return for the many kind offices which, in the time of their need, they have received at the hand of parents.

It would, also, be but a natural expectation, that the hand of those so nearly allied should be first stretched out for the relief of those in need and distress.

And, further, this would be but a very suitable, and becoming precedent for the next generation.—No one knows what may be his lot, before he leaves the world, whether prosperity, or indigence may attend him—“For the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.”

Wisdom would, therefore, direct that children should exhibit that example by their conduct, which they would wish their children should follow, under like circumstances; lest peradventure, “the iniquity of their youth be imputed to them.”

5. The practice of all those injunctions laid on Children, as incumbent duties towards their parents is directly contributive to the peace, and common interest of the family: and in no case is it calculated to injure their own comfort or respectability.

Families never appear to better advantage nor enjoy more felicity, nor do children ever consult more directly their own happiness and honour, than when a strict and faithful attention is paid to the instituted rules of family government.

And what is still more, this appears to be the will of God, who has made all things for himself; whose



all creatures are ; and who orders and directs all things in the wisest and best possible manner.

To know that it is his will, and of his appointment that children should cheerfully, and with fidelity, perform all the duties of subjects to parental control, should operate as an ample inducement to a ready compliance.

Turn our attention which way we may, a flood of arguments rush in upon us, suited to enforce the propriety and fitness of a cheerful compliance in children, with all those duties incumbent on them, towards their parents.

Nothing but the essence of depravity and madness of heart, could lead any to violate and counteract the divine institutions which are concerted in so much wisdom and goodness, and are so friendly not only to public, but also to private happiness.

IMPROVEMENT by remarks——

1. Children have this as an agreeable subject of reflection and gratitude, when capable of reflecting, that in the course of divine providence they are put under the best form of government which the present depraved state of men would possibly admit.

Many, in all ages, have racked their inventions to find what is the best mode of governing nations, and many different modes have been adopted. And all the different modes which have been adopted, have in their turn, been attended with their inconveniences. The more free or democratic form, has in many instances been very popular and pleasing. But mon-

archy would be much preferable, could the community be assured of a monarch who should possess a measure of wisdom and judgment equal to the combined wisdom and judgment of the whole community besides ; and who would ever feel that his own interest essentially consisted in pursuing and accomplishing the highest interests of his subjects. The great evil generally attending this form of government, is, that monarchs are wont to wax proud and imperious, and to gratify themselves in trampling on the rights of their subjects, and become great oppressors.

But to this great and leading evil, which generally attends this form of government among nations, the instituted form of family government which is really a monarchy, is but little exposed. Parents in their natural make and constitution, generally possess those tender affections for their children ; and feel so deeply interested in their well being, that though absolute in their government, are much more liable to exercise too great indulgence, than too great severity.— Children are therefore very safe on this ground. And on this account they have a subject for much gratitude and thankfulness.

2. The peculiar wisdom of divine providence in the economy of a family. The state and situation into which children are at first cast, if parents perform their duty, is wisely calculated to fit them for future subjection to government for which they are candidates.



As rational creatures, they are liable to be under some dominion and control, not only through the narrow bounds of time; but also throughout the boundless period of eternity—While here on this stage of life, they are liable to be under some human government; and whatever may be their situation or capacity here, whether subjects or rulers; in the coming state, they must be under subjection to divine control, and that for ever. In this view, then, of the scenes for which children have commenced a probation, there must appear a peculiar wisdom in the divine calculations for them in fixing them in the first period of life under a system of government so well calculated to fit them for future subjection to government, human and divine.—In this situation, if faithfully treated by parents, they may have the first maxims laid for their being useful in life and happy in eternity.—And happy would it be for community as well as for children, if parents would faithfully fulfil their duty in this important relation.—But unluckily, through the neglect of parents whose duty it is to govern their children, this happy institution for the most part becomes of very little use.

3. When children violate and transgress the commands of parents they are directly sinning against God—It is God who has made it their duty to submit to parental government—This is not merely of man's will—And it is he who hath commanded them to obey their parents.—Therefore every transgression of parental commands, of which children are guilty, is

attended with this additional criminality, that it is also a transgression of God's express command.

This may serve as one instance, to shew the opposition of children's hearts to divine commands while very young; together with their guilt and criminality.

Some conceive that children cannot be guilty of sin; or of transgressing God's law until they are able, actually, to understand the commands of God—But a child while very young may understand his parent's command, and may transgress it. This command is the same, to all intents, as if he positively knew that it was God's command—And this child, by shewing his opposition of heart to this command, which is agreeable to the will of God, really manifests his opposition of heart towards God, whom he knows not; and according to whose direction this command is laid upon him. And the same spirit and temper, if in exercise, would lead him to transgress, though he positively knew the command was from God.

4. Those persons in adult age, or advanced life, by reflection, may hence be led to see what has been the iniquity of their youthful days: and in that way to see for what they have to repent.

That truth, which may serve to shew us what we have been, may in its place be profitable, as well as that which teaches us what we now are. We have all in our turn been children; and under family government. And if by this subject we find ourselves reproved for our youthful folly, may we all be ex-



cited to becoming repentance, that we may find pardon and acceptance in the sight of God.

5. Disobedience in children to parental government and commands, is a crime very odious in the sight of heaven.

God has wise and important ends in view, in placing children in their happy situation under parental government and instruction.

He has made them candidates, not only for places and stations in the present world, but for scenes of endless duration and importance in the world to come.

The situation in which they are here placed is well and wisely suited to their being useful instruments in the service of their maker, both in time, and throughout eternity.

But a disobedient, refractory temper, manifested in conduct, is directly calculated to thwart all the happy ends for which this peculiarly salutary situation was bequeathed to them.

How very poisonous then, and displeasing must such conduct appear in the view of the great and kind author of their existence? It is surely calculated to excite his indignation; and to bring down his judgments on such young rebellious subjects.

Children have reason to fear and tremble whenever they despise, offend, or disobey their parents: for thereby they provoke the wrath, and tempt the vengeance of an holy God.

Let children, then, when taught their duty towards their parents, learn to be very circumspect in their

treatment of them; and never rob them of that becoming tribute of respect, kindness, and cheerful obedience, which God has enjoined on them, as incumbent duty.

Let them ever hold it in remembrance, that if they slight and disobey their parents, who are set to act towards them in God's stead, they are really slighting and disobeying God himself: who will one day bring them into judgment for all their deeds whether they be good or bad.

May the great and kind parent of our numerous race inspire the mind of our youth with that meek, submissive, and obedient temper of mind by which they may secure the approbation of their own consciences, the applause of their fellow creatures, and the acceptance of their God; and their virtuous examples be perpetuated to the latest generations, Amen.



## APPENDIX.

*An Address to Husbands and Wives.*

BELoved PARTNERS,

EVERY institution of divine origin has some valuable end, or ends, in view.

The matrimonial connexion is of divine origin; and in many respects is the most contributive to earthly felicity of any institution with which our race was ever favoured. It contemplates not only the present happiness of the parties connexed, and the well being of their posterity, but the peace and good order of community, and even the prosperity of religion, and the kingdom of God.

Aside from this institution, what must have been the state of the world, either in relation to individual happiness, the well being of posterity, or the public peace and order, both civil and religious? Individuals must have been deprived of the richest earthly source of refined felicity; posterity been left like the brutal offspring, and the whole human family thrown in a state of wild confusion and disorder.

From what other earthly source could have been derived those rational and refined pleasures of which the matrimonial connexion is productive when wisely formed, and judiciously improved? On what other ground could have been secured the protection and support of children in their helpless state? And what but this could have secured their pious education, with the civil and religious order of community?

This institution is the most wisely calculated, and has the most powerful influence to effect these happy ends: notwithstanding all which by infidels and libertines may be said to the contrary. It ought therefore ever to be holden sacred; and never to experience in its subjects, that cold indifference and injudicious treatment which, in too great a measure, by the inconsiderate, it is daily receiving. Judging from common appearances, we are constrained to conceive that many persons, when forming this connexion, or afterwards, when improving upon it, have but very imperfect and inadequate conceptions of the important objects for which it was instituted.

Even diminutive and very vulgar ideas may prevail with some. And hence this connexion, in too many instances, is almost, if not entirely, destitute of that felicity which it promises; and of which, when wisely formed and judiciously improved, it is invariably productive.

Those who are allied by these endearing bands, should ever keep in lively remembrance how impor-



tant things are the appendages of their connubial union: and never forget that their own personal good and happiness, the respectability and happiness of their family, and even the peace of society, are much depending on their conduct towards each other; and the improvement they make of this relation.

From a general view of the great objects and wise designs for which this happy connexion was instituted, husbands and wives should mutually exhibit those expressive tokens of respect and tender regard, together with all those kind offices which may serve to heighten mutual esteem, and produce a pleasing, as well as useful lustre, in community.

Would they consult their own comfort, peace, and highest happiness in life; the comfort, peace, and respectability of their family; the peace and happiness of community; or the promotion of virtue and piety, let them be persuaded cautiously and sacredly to avoid every species of bitterness and irritating communication: and that nothing be permitted to escape them, through any channel, which shall not savour of a tender affection, pleasantness of temper, and an unfeigned attachment in love. Let it not suffice to say, "I was provoked or irritated." The sacrifice may be very great. Let traits of love sparkle and shew themselves in every movement. This enkindling into a lively flame, from mutual exertions, will make glad your hearts; and give pleasure to all surrounding beholders.

Imperfections, more or less, are to be expected in persons of every description in life.

If they be discovered in this intimate connexion, they should by no means be exaggerated, or augmented; but tenderly rectified or covered with the mantle of love. Let every amiable property be diligently cultivated; and perseveringly encouraged, and promoted.

Ungrounded jealousy ought never to find shelter in the breast of any subject of the matrimonial bands. This implacable enemy to all the social sweets makes frequent inroads upon the different societies of men; breaks the bands of mutual confidence; and saps the fountain of friendly intercourse. Most unhappy is it, when this poisonous viper obtains access to the bosom of those allied by most endearing bands. It is there fed, and nourished at the expense of richest joys.

Let this unfriendly malignant existence then, never steal a passage into your minds; nor find any place of residence within your walls.—Let it be banished, as the greatest nuisance, from your happy society; and let no provision be made for its continuation or support.

Let every source of bitterness, and malignity be carefully eradicated from this field of delight; and every pleasing and virtuous property, with equal care and diligence, be encouraged, and promoted.

Great is the goodness of our creator, in permitting our race to enjoy the sweets of social life. Let



every soul, then, participating in this divine blessing, be excited to that lively and genuine gratitude which is but a reasonable tribute for so rich an endowment and make that judicious improvement of this wisely calculated institution which sound reason and revelation direct.——In fine,

May all the subjects of wedlock's bands become possessed of a pious regard for their family's real good, as well as their own; the good of society; the common peace; the promotion of religion; and the glory of God, their creator; some of the important ends for which marriage was instituted in the race: and from these pious views, and interesting motives be vigorously animated to cultivate all the connubial virtues; and to discharge with that fidelity all the duties pertaining to their relation: that they may behold, and with much pleasure, here enjoy the happy fruits of their virtuous conduct; and be prepared to participate in that more refined bliss, above, where "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the Angels of God."

AN  
ADDRESS

TO

## PARENTS.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

**I**T having pleased the great Author of our being to confer on you the honour and happiness of being instrumental in bringing, into life, rational existencies; and to commit the care, government, and instruction of them to you; a chain of duties has consequently devolved on you to which you had, otherwise, never been called.

Every station, and capacity sustained in life has its appropriate intrustment committed, and duties enjoined. And every character here is acting for eternity. None of our conduct, in this our state of probation, is terminated with present time; but all looks into a boundless extent of duration. The intrustment committed to you, as parents, is very momentous, and weighty.

You are to act, not only, for yourselves, as individuals; but for your children, also, whose interest and wellbeing, temporal, and eternal, peculiarly de-



pend on your faithful discharge of duty in your appropriate capacity.

If the importance of the parental charge be properly viewed, and clearly understood, there would be no need of any apology in favour of the author of this treatise, though he should be very importunate with parents, endeavouring to excite in their minds a lively sense of their duty; and animate them to a faithful discharge of it.

Greater good cannot be proposed, on the one hand, as encouragement to faithfulness; nor greater evil, on the other, as a terror to negligence; than what are, in the sacred scriptures, abundantly set forth. In no way can you secure your own happiness, present, or future, but in the way of your duty; and in no other way have you any hopeful prospect of securing the happiness of your children.

Should we view things only in relation to the present world, very weighty arguments might be adduced in favour of parental duty. But when things are viewed in relation to eternity, how much more weighty must be the arguments to faithfulness, in this important trust?

Take, then, into serious, and candid consideration the things of the present and future world, which hold a close connexion with your parental conduct; and consider how extensive, and important consequences will follow your proceedings in that relation. And from this view of things, be determined that no obstructions shall prevent your compliance with

duty; whether they may arise from within, or from without.

It is readily conceived that there may be many things which rise up in the view of parents; and have strong influence in preventing their faithful discharge of duty towards their children. A certain affectionate fondness, peculiar to parents, with some, has great influence; and prevails much to the prejudice of that wholesome government, and due subordination which is very contributive to the good of children. *This should ever be holden under careful inspection; and never receive too great latitude; lest it ruin those it means to succour.*

Without family government, and subordination, the influence of parents, with their children, must dwindle; and the opportunity for doing them good, proportionably disappear. To others, may be attached, that measure and degree of supineness, relative to things of futurity, by which every religious duty becomes a burden; and a task almost insupportable. By this influence, in many instances, all subordination, pious examples, and religious instructions, are neglected. But such parents should remember that too great is the sacrifice to be offered upon the altar of sluggish indifference. They should arouse, put on animation, and bestir themselves, knowing that concerns of the highest moment are at stake.

Some parents, from a peculiar aversion to being thought singular; and a dislike to depart from the



common current of practice, may be influenced to omit those duties which they might otherwise approve, and practice. But here, again, it should be observed, that if the common current of practice be in a wrong channel, there is the greater need of vigorous exertion to oppose it; lest all go down together to destruction. This very consideration, with which many pacify themselves in their neglect of duty, is one of the most weighty arguments to the opposite purpose. The general neglect of parental duty presents a most gloomy, and threatening aspect. By this is endangered, not only the peace, and comforts of this life; but the happiness of souls in that which is to come. And this great evil can be remedied only by a reformation in individual parents. How forceable, then, does this consideration apply, in shewing the great impropriety of our *following the multitude to do evil*? And with what emphasis does it call upon parents to lend their most active assistance in heading this evil, and sweeping torrent?

However numerous, or formidable may be the obstacles presenting themselves in the way of your duty they form no rational excuse for your neglect; but rather conspire to strengthen and enforce your obligation.

Arise, then, parents, from your criminal conformity to the ruling customs of the day; and arm your minds with a resolute, and pious determination, to follow duty rather than the fashions and vices of men. Adopt the laudable, and pious resolution of

faithful Joshua—"As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The present is, in many respects, an evil day. Not only vice and immorality, is in general, abounding among us; and suing for the attention of our youth, to plunge them in wretchedness: but errors in things of religion; and gross delusions are breaking in like a flood. One is ruining *this* way; and another *that*. One is crying, Lo, *here* is Christ; and another, Lo, *there*. Your houses are even compassed for proselytes: and without your wise, and faithful guidance, where are your poor children? What must probably, be their lot, but that of lambs among devouring wolves?

It pertains to you, to stand at the helm, and guide your house. And to shun the dangers of the day, it is incumbent, that you exercise all the prudence, and wisdom of which you are possessed; with a persevering fidelity in the line of your duty.

Think not to say, then,—“our abilities are small; and our exertions can have but little, if any, influence in opposing the common current.”—If this may be admitted as a rational excuse for our neglecting to improve the abilities we possess, it will effectually exclude every argument for any reformation: because if it may be admitted in one case it must in all. But let it be remembered that God is able to improve weak, and feeble instruments, to effect great, and able purposes. And your faithful exertions in duty will never be lost labour.



Let none seek to excuse themselves; nor withdraw the shoulder from this so necessary labour.

The general declension of the day calls loudly upon every parent for active, and vigorous exertion in stemming the evil current of manners.

A reformation is of great importance. And the youthful period is the time to implant first principles. In this period, with the divine aid, much may be done, by parents, towards a reformation. Much, consequently, is incumbent on them, during this valuable period.

While such a precious opportunity, then, is in your hands for doing good, to yourselves, to your children, to your fellow creatures in general, and to the common cause of righteousness and religion, be not inattentive to those momentous concerns.

In but very few, if any, other ways can you rationally expect to do more good to your generation; or more acceptably to serve your maker, than by strictly, and faithfully performing your duty towards your children. This holds one of the first places in the duty of Man. The care of souls is here, committed in trust; and their everlasting wellbeing is depending.

Now, Dear Parents, remember, "*the time is short.*" You are fast progressing towards the confines of an eternal state. For your important intrustment, you must soon give an account.

If it shall appear, in the great day of accounts that you have been faithful in your stewardship; and

that souls which have been committed to your care, have, through your means, been brought to glory, and felicity; how happy, and joyful must be your lot? The dear children of your care will then rise up, and call you blessed. God will openly approve your fidelity with this heart rejoicing benediction—"*Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*"—Then shall the heavenly inhabitants unite in bidding you welcome to those blissful abodes.

But, if on the other hand, it shall then appear that you have been unfaithful in your stewardship—that you have been negligent in duty: have not trained up your children in the way they should go; but have left them to follow their own vain inclinations; and that they have, finally, through your neglect, come to ruin: how awfully dreadful must then be your fate. Your poor, wretched children, now, in despair, will rise up as swift witnesses against your unfaithfulness; and will curse the parents who were instruments of bringing them into existence; and into this state of misery. God your judge, with awful majesty, will denounce—"*Depart ye cursed, into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"

Oh! Parents, be wise for yourselves, while it is called *To day*. Set about your duty, if heretofore neglected. Pray much, and fervently to God, for his assistance.



Govern well your children. Restrain their unruly inclinations. Teach them the things of godliness; and those things which make for their future well-being.

Teach them their constant dependence on God; and their own sinfulness. Teach them to pray to God for mercy; and to live lives of true religion. And, withal, exemplify, and enforce your good, and wholesome instructions, by a daily display of your own pious conduct.——Finally,

May you ever be assisted, by divine grace, to that clear, and lively view, and sense of the great future realities, that you may be enabled to discharge with fidelity, your duty towards yourselves, your children, your neighbours, and your God: and at last be openly acquitted; and be received to felicity. And may your children be then presented before you, as standing testimonies, and seals of your faithfulness in duty; and effulgent gems in your crown of rejoicing for ever.

AN  
ADDRESS

TO

**CHILDREN.**

DEAR YOUTH,

**E**VERY created object has its origin, and its principle end for which it was designed.

You have begun an endless existence. The scenes for which you are candidates are inexpressibly important. You have entered that state of probation which looks not merely at objects in the present world; but has direct reference to things of eternity. Whatever be the station, rank, or office, which you may here sustain, whether important, or unimportant, in the view of men, your conduct will hold an intimate connexion with an endless duration.

Great is the tree of which your present existence is but a tender bud, or first shoot. It is, therefore, very interesting that the first beginnings of an existence, so important in its future consequences, should take a direction to some happy end.



God, in his wise providence, has made kind provision for your good, and happiness, present, and future.

To this end, he has put you under the guardianship, government, and tuition of parents, who in training you up are to act in God's stead; and whom he has inspired with a very tender affection for you; and a solicitous concern for your respectability here and happiness hereafter. A situation this of all others, which could have been devised in this depraved state of the world, the most salutary for children.

By the exertions of your parents, under God, you have been, not only, nourished up from your helpless state, to a state of activity: but, in some measure, have been led into a knowledge of the divine will; and the things which make for your endless felicity, and joy. In some measure, you have been taught your duty, both towards your maker, and fellow creatures. You have been taught your accountability for your conduct, and improvement in the present life.

You have been taught, also, that a life of religion, by faith in Jesus Christ, is the only way to enter into future life, and happiness.

Be entreated, then, by *one* who wishes well to your souls, to lend your first attention to religion, and the things of the next world. Let it be your fixed resolution, *to seek the Lord while he may be found*; and to serve him while you have opportunity.

Many, by *delaying* this important business until some future, and more convenient time, have, doubt-

less, been left to harden in sin; and have sunk down into endless despair.

You are, or may be, surrounded with many inviting objects which may warmly solicit your attention; and have great influence in leading away your minds from suitable reflections upon things of the highest importance.

This world's pleasures possess a sovereign influence upon the youthful passions. Imperceptibly, you may be drawn away by these allurements: and happy is it, if you are not entangled beyond your power of retreat, even before you are apprised of your danger. In this view of your situation, wisdom proclaims to you in the following language. "*Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*"

You may, possibly, like many others be vainly suggesting, at least to your own consciences, 'that the youthful period is not the time for seriousness, and religion.'—But remember this is a dangerous suggestion. However young and sprightly you may be, you are not too young to have merited the wrath of God; or to need his grace in order to your being screened from it. Of course you are not too young to seek, and pray to God for mercy; and to serve him in the practice of religion. And that you improve your present opportunity in religious pursuits is highly important; for life is very uncertain.

You may never arrive at that period, or age which you may now, in your own minds, be assigning to



religious uses. And should you be permitted to arrive at that age, you may find yourselves attended with those embarrassments which you may, as yet, never have contemplated.

And, furthermore, without religion, you are unprepared to encounter the scenes of life, for which you may be probationers. Without religion, persons are neither prepared to live, comfortably; to die, peaceably; or to enter, joyfully, into the next world. *Religion is the one thing needful.*

All suggestions, therefore, unfriendly to youthful piety, are but in vain proposed, except in view of a depraved, foolish heart.

Dear youth, let not such folly, and madness, which inclines to wicked ways, take the first lead in your young, rational minds; but first prove by your own experience, what are the sweets of genuine religion and then, if you wish to decide on the question, 'whether virtue, or vice, produce the most solid satisfaction and happiness;' you may be under better advantage to make up a rational judgment. To embrace any suggestions unfriendly to religion, in opposition to the declarations of sacred scripture; and the abundant testimony of experienced Christians, without making any proper trial or experiment for yourselves, is very unwise. These are things of too great importance to be decided, but in view of full, and rational testimony. Let a fair experiment be made with religion; and it is presumed you will readily and cheerfully join issue with an inspired author in saying, that *wisdom excelleth folly, as far as*

*light excelleth darkness.*—Should you once engage sincerely in religion, that one thing needful, that all important employment; you would never lament your having thus engaged; but would rather wonder that any rational being could be so foolish as to neglect it—True religion being implanted in your young minds, would render the present part of your life, pleasant and useful; the trying, and bitter scenes of a future day, feasible; the close of your life, peaceful; and your eternity, blessed.—All rational considerations invite you to turn your earliest attention to things of first importances—Be persuaded, then, to forsake the foolish, and live.—Seek the Lord while he may be found. And may you early find that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace.



LITTLE CHILDREN

INVITED TO

**JESUS CHRIST.**

A

**SERMON,**

PREACHED IN HANOVER COUNTY, VIRGINIA,

MAY 8, 1758.

WITH

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE REMARKABLE RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS AMONG

THE STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGE OF

NEW-JERSEY.

By SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

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LITTLE CHILDREN

INVITED TO

JESUS CHRIST.

MARK, CHAP. X. VERSE 14.

*But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeas'd, and said unto them, Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not: For of such is the Kingdom of God.*

**T**HE return of this blooming season of the year puts me in mind of my duty towards my young friends in this congregation; those growing shoots, those blooming flowers of human nature.—To you, therefore, my dear youth, I would now address myself; and would do it with all the tenderness of a fatherly heart.

Among you I hope I shall not meet with discouragement of the same kind which I often meet with in my addresses to others. Among you, I hope I shall not find any veterans in sin, confirmed and hardened in wickedness by a long practice; though alas! we sometimes meet with the shocking curiosity of one young in years, but old in sin. Among you, I hope to find that tenderness of heart, and those soft impressible passions which are so peculiar to your age, and which may render you more susceptible of religious impressions than those whose hearts are at once hardened by age and by a long habit of sinning; these circumstances afford



me encouragement. But alas! even among you, soft and pliable as you are, I expect great discouragements, though of another kind. You are gay, merry, and thoughtless; and cannot bear to fix your thoughts upon such disagreeable subjects; and flatter yourselves it is time enough for you to submit to the mortification of attending to them, as you advance farther in life. Your passions and appetites are strong and unruly; your hopes warm and sanguine. And therefore I am afraid sundry of you will hardly allow me a serious hearing, though but for an hour. However, whether you hear, or whether you forbear, I must endeavour to deliver my message to you in the name of God.

It is a very encouraging thought, that the blessed Jesus has a very tender regard for such young creatures. This he shewed in his warm resentment against those that would have kept them from his arms, while he dwelt among men.

Some of his friends brought their young children to him, that he might touch them, or lay his hands upon them, as a sign of his blessing them, after the manner of the patriarchs and prophets, in their solemn benedictions. But his disciples thinking it beneath the dignity of so great and divine a prophet, to be troubled and teased with little children; and apprehending that such thoughtless creatures could receive no advantage from him, rebuked their parents, and would have sent them away. This must be a very affecting discouragement to parents to find themselves forbid to come to Christ, and that by his disciples, who ought to have introduced them, and encouraged their application. *But when Jesus saw the dear little creatures sent away from him he was greatly displeased.* If good men through mistake, and bad men through obstinate wickedness, discourage these young immortals in coming to Christ, he himself is willing they should come, and warmly resents it, when any hindrance is thrown in their way. This gracious Shepherd takes special care of the weak and young in his flock; he "gathers the lambs in his

arms, and carries them in his bosom." Hence he tells his disciples and all around him, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." They are all welcome to my arms: and the little sinners stand in need of a Saviour.

When he says, "*Suffer them to come, and forbid them not.*" he does not mean, merely, that they should not hinder or discourage them; but he means that they should *positively assist* and encourage them to come to him; and that parents should be so far from hindering them, that they should bring them themselves.

This exhortation was particularly addressed to his disciples, and through them, to all the ministers of the gospel. And I feel its obligation binding me in particular to this agreeable duty. Indeed the lovely forms, the blooms of reason, and the engaging little actions of those amiable creatures, whom I now address, might win the affection even of a stranger, and excite him to perform every kind office in his power for them.

Our Saviour adds a reason why he would have little children suffered to come to him, which is "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." This may be understood in two senses. It may either signify the gospel church, which is often called *the kingdom of Heaven*, and even the heavenly church consists of such little children as these: such little creatures are admitted as members into this divine society, and are entitled to its privileges. And therefore, "Christian parents ought to bring them to me; and it is their duty to come as soon as they are capable of acting. Therefore forbid them not, but encourage them." Or it may signify the church of God, both in its earthly and heavenly state, consists of *such persons*; that is, of persons who resemble little children in temper; who like them are humble, meek, pliable, forgiving, easily appeased, teachable. I rather chuse this sense, because the connection seems to lead to it; for the very next words are, "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a



little child, he shall not enter therein." This is also agreeable to what he says elsewhere, when he makes a little child an emblem of the Christian temper. (*Matth. xviii. 2, 3, 4.*) Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven." In this view the argument is conclusive: for if children have some dispositions, in which even men must resemble and imitate them, before they can enter into the kingdom of heaven; then certainly children are capable of being brought to Jesus, and it is their duty to come to him.

You see, my dear children and youth, that you have a right, and that it is your duty to come to Jesus. Therefore, oh! come to him: Come to him this very day, without delay.

But here, I hope, you start a very proper question, "What is it to come to Christ? Or, in what sense are we to understand this phrase, as it may be applied to us now, since he is removed from our world?"

Coming to Christ, in my text, did indeed mean a bodily motion to him: and this was practicable, while he tabernacled in flesh among men. But even then it signified much more. It signified coming to him as a divine teacher, to receive instruction; as a Saviour, to obtain eternal life; and as the only Mediator through whom guilty sinners might have access to God. It signified a motion of soul towards him, correspondent to the bodily motion of coming: a motion of the desires, a flight of tender affections towards him. In this view it is still practicable to come to Christ; and it is our duty in these latter days, as much as it was theirs who were his cotemporaries upon earth. It is in this view I now urge it upon you: and in this view it includes the following particulars:

1. A clear conviction of sin; of sin in heart, in word, and in practice; of sin against knowledge; against alluring mercies and fatherly corrections; of sin against all the strongest ties to duty. Without such a conviction of sin, it is impossible you should fly to him as a Saviour: for he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

2. An affecting sense of danger, upon the account of sin. You cannot fly to him as a Saviour, till you see your extreme need of salvation; and you cannot see your need of salvation, till you are sensible of your danger; sensible that you are every moment liable to everlasting condemnation, and have no title at all to the divine favour.

3. An humbling sense of your own inability to save yourselves by the merit of your own best endeavours. I do not mean, that you should neglect your best endeavours; or that you should not exert your utmost strength in every good work, and in the earnest use of all the means of grace: for you never will come to Christ, till you are brought to this. But I mean, that while you are doing your utmost, you must be sensible, that you do not deserve any favour at all from God on that account, and that you neither can nor do make any atonement for your sins by all your good works; but that God may justly condemn you notwithstanding. Till you are sensible of this, you will weary yourselves in vain, in idle self-righteous efforts to perform the work which Jesus came into the world to perform, and which he alone was able to do; I mean to make atonement for your sin, and to work out a righteousness to recommend you to God. It is an eternal truth, that you will never come to Christ as a Saviour, till you are deeply sensible there is no salvation in any other; and particularly that you are not able to save yourselves.

4. An affecting conviction that Jesus Christ is a glorious, all sufficient, and willing Saviour: that his righteousness is perfect, equal to all the demands of the di-



vine law, and sufficient to make satisfaction for all our sins, and procure for us all the blessings of the divine favour; that he is able and willing to "save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" and that he is freely offered in the gospel to all that will accept him, however unworthy, and however great their sins. Indeed it is an eternal truth, that though multitudes perish, it is not for want of a Saviour. There is a Saviour all-sufficient and perfectly willing; and this you must be convinced of before you can come to him.

5. An entire dependance upon his merits alone for acceptance with God. Sensible that you have no merit of your own, on which to depend; and sensible also that Jesus is a sure foundation, on which you may safely venture your eternal all, you must cast all your dependance and fix your entire trust on him. You will as it were hang about him, as the only support for your sinking soul, and plead his righteousness as the only ground of your acceptance with God. This is so unnatural to a proud self-confident sinner, that you must be brought very low indeed, thoroughly mortified and self-emptied, before you will submit to it.

6. A cheerful subjection to him as your ruler; and a voluntary surrender of yourselves to his service. If you come to him at all, it will be as poor penitent rebels, returning to duty, with shame and sorrow, and fully determined never to depart from it more. To embrace Christ as a Saviour, and yet not submit to him as our ruler; to trust in his righteousness, and in the mean time disobey his authority, is the greatest absurdity, and utterly inconsistent with the wise constitution of the gospel.

And now, my dear young friends, I hope even your tender minds have some ideas what it is to come to Christ. And therefore, when I exhort you to it, you know what I mean. Come then, come to Jesus: ye little tender lambs, come to the great Shepherd of Israel, who loves to carry such as you in his bosom. Come, deeply sensible of your sins. Young as you

are, you have been guilty of sins beyond number. You have spoken many bad words; you have been peevish, sullen, angry, obstinate, disobedient to parents, wild, thoughtless, and too full of play. And which is worse than all, you have bad hearts. Must they not be very bad hearts, that are so little inclined to think of the great God, and love him, who made you a few years ago, and who has ever since been bestowing a thousand blessings upon you every day? Must they not be very bad hearts, that are so little inclined, or rather so averse to prayer, to reading, and to the service of God in general? That are so unwilling to think seriously of God and eternity? That are so strongly inclined to sin, and childish follies and vanities? You cannot but know, my dear young creatures, that this is your case; and therefore, believe it, you are sinners, great sinners. Yes, though your forms are lovely, and your pretty little actions very engaging, yet you are very guilty creatures. Therefore come to Jesus as sinners.

Come also sensible of your danger. Believe it, while you have no interest in Christ, while you do not love God, and delight in his service, you are in danger every moment of falling into hell. The threatenings of the law of God are in full force against you. The great God is justly angry with you every day. The lions of hell are going about seeking to devour you. You have no title to heaven, and no security of the present life. Children and youth die, you know, as well as the aged. Yes, the cold hand of death may seize you, lively, gay, and merry as you are. And oh! WHERE ARE YOU THEN? Therefore come to Jesus as perishing sinners, deeply sensible of your danger. Come to him, as a drowning man catches at a plank or rope to save him. Cry to him, "Save me, Lord; I perish. I stand upon the slippery brink of ruin, ready every moment to tumble in. Oh! stretch out thy hand and save me."



Come to him deeply *sensible of your own utter helplessness*. Pray, read, repent, attend upon all the means of grace; do every good work. But despair of ever saving yourselves by the merits of these things. Be sensible that all your righteousnesses are but as filthy rags: that after you have done all, you are but unprofitable servants, and deserve no reward at all from God. While you are full of yourselves, self-sufficient and presumptuous, you can never come to Christ. And oh! that you might this day obtain a just view of your lost and helpless situation in yourselves! Even then, you would have no ground for despair: for though you are helpless in yourselves, yet "God hath laid help for you upon one that is mighty." Therefore,

Come to Jesus as an *all glorious, all sufficient and willing Saviour*. Oh! that you did but see his infinite glory and beauty! Then I need speak no more to you, you would of yourselves give yourselves up to him for ever. Your hearts would be instantaneously captivated by his irresistible charms. Oh! that you were but sensible of his *all-sufficiency*! then you would no more hesitate and doubt whether you might venture your eternal all into his hands. You would be fully convinced that you might most securely trust him with ten thousand souls, if you had them. Oh! that you were sensible how *willing* he is to save you! you would no longer doubt whether he would receive such guilty creatures as you. Can you hear him declare over and over, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Can you hear that prayer for his murderers, from his dying lips, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Nay, can you see him agonizing on a cross for you, and yet question whether he is willing to save you? Oh! if he be not willing, more than willing, why these affectionate assurances and kind invitations? Why this labour and sorrow? Why these tears, these agonies, this expence of blood? Believe it, he is willing, he is eagerly desirous

to receive the vilest and most guilty among you, if you are but willing to come to him. Therefore come to him as to an all-glorious, all-sufficient, and most willing Saviour.

Come to him also with a *full dependance upon him* for acceptance with God, and every blessing. Trust in him, though he should slay you. Venture your all upon him. Lean upon him as you are coming out of this wilderness. Renounce all dependance upon your own righteousness. Build no longer upon that quicksand, or you sink for ever. But behold, God has "laid in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation;" and here you may safely build the high fabric of your immortal hopes.

Finally: come to him as to *your ruler and king*. Yield yourselves willing subjects to his laws for the future. Let every thought become a willing captive to him. Let his will be your rule. Let his law regulate your temper and conduct; direct you to what you should love and hate, what you should desire and avoid; what you should do and forbear.

Thus come to Jesus Christ, my dear young creatures, and he will certainly receive you into the arms of his favour; and there he will bear you safe through this World, till he lodge you for ever in his blessed bosom. I know you cannot come to him in your own strength; but it is your duty, and it is in your power to *endeavour* to come to him. And it is in the use of your best endeavours, and in that way only, that you have any reason to expect the assistance of divine grace to enable you.

Therefore, come, come! The spirit of God in this sacred book, and in your consciences, and the bride, the church of Christ, say *come*; and I that have heard it, and all the ministers of the gospel, say *come*. "And let him that is a thirst for the blessing of the gos-



pel, come: and whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely."—*Rev. xxii, 17.*

Do you need arguments to excite you to come? Then my text will furnish you with sundry of great weight.

1. Jesus was highly displeas'd with those that would have kept little children from him. And how much more will he be displeas'd with you, if you keep yourselves from him by your own voluntary act? Let others do what they can to hinder you, you may go to him in spite of them. But if yourselves continue unwilling, your case is desperate; you commence your own executioners, and die by your own hands. Must not Jesus resent it, when he spreads his arms to receive you; and yet you refuse to come to him? And are you willing to incur the wrath of the Lamb? Are you willing to rouse him into a lion, to tear you to pieces? Are you willing to cast yourselves out of favour with the only Saviour? If you offend that only friend, and turn him into an enemy, who can befriend you? Must you not perish without remedy? Oh! that you would seriously consider, my dear youth, what it is to turn the blessed Jesus against you! better the whole universe be against you than he.

2. Jesus commands *others* to suffer little children to come to him, and not to forbid them. And how much more does he command *you*? If others should suffer you, then how much more ought you to suffer yourselves to come to Christ? Oh! will you throw obstructions in your own way? Are parents, are ministers, are all around you, oblig'd to suffer you, and even encourage you to come to Christ? Are you at liberty, do you think, to forbid yourselves? Surely the duty in the first place, lies upon you. Therefore, Oh! come to him without delay.

But as this part of my text may be applied with peculiar propriety to parents I must make a short digressive address to them—Fathers and Mothers! "O suf-

fer your little children to come to Jesus, and forbid them not"—Forbid them not, by your own examples. Let them not see you neglect Jesus Christ yourselves, and going on in sin; for this will be the greatest hindrance you can cast in their way. Forbid them not, by discouraging the appearances of thoughtfulness and serious impressions on their tender minds.—Forbid them not, by flattering them with false hopes, and healing their wound slightly, speaking peace to them without good reason; but endeavour to make them sensible of their sinfulness and danger, and their extreme need of a Saviour; of the difficulty of conversion, and a course of strict religion: in short, let them know the truth of their case.

I told you before, that this prohibition, "forbid them not," implies an injunction positively to encourage and assist them in coming to Christ. Therefore, parents, do all you can by instruction, by example, by prayer to God, and by every means in your power, to bring your dear children to Christ. Remember he hath laid his commands upon you; and dare you disobey, especially, when the same duty is enforced upon you by the strongest ties of nature?

But I return to you, my young friends, to whose service I have devoted this hour. And my last motive to you derived from the text is,

3. "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven." This, I told you, may be taken in two senses; and in both it may be a strong inducement to you to come to Christ.

If the meaning be, that the church of God consists of persons, who in temper and disposition resemble little children, then it is natural to reflect how much you are oblig'd to come to Christ, that the amiable qualities you have, may be finish'd and complete. You already have many lovely dispositions, and even a stranger might see many things in you that might engage his heart. Even a saint must resemble you in some things, and be as a little child, as a preparative for heaven.



But alas! you want one thing; and that is, inward holiness. And without this, all your amiable qualities are utterly deficient, and leave you guilty, vile, worthless creatures, in the sight of God. Without this, you are really but gilded masses of corruption and deformity. But should you come to Jesus, he would put his comeliness upon you. He would make you all-glorious within: he would complete your character, and render you all excellent throughout. But alas! if you come not to him, the agreeable qualities you have, will gradually decay, and you will degenerate into downright naminged wickedness. When you sink into the infernal regions, you will contract the very genius and temper of a devil; all the remains of virtue, and whatever of the image of God you may have retained since the fall will drop from you. Thus "from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath."

But if we consider this reason, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven," as signifying, that the gospel church upon earth, and even the heavenly church, consists of little children as well as adults, then what a great inducement may this be to you to labour to be of their happy number? Why should not you enter into the kingdom of heaven as well as others? There's young Abijah, in whom was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, even the wicked family of Jeroboam. There are Jeremiah and John the baptist, who were sanctified from the womb. There is Timothy, who from a child knew the holy scriptures. There are thousands of little creatures, who just stayed long enough upon earth to know themselves, and their God and Saviour, and have their depraved nature changed, and then winged their willing flight to heaven. It is not to my present purpose to enquire into the future state of those that die in infancy, before they are capable of reason. But as to the many who die in their earlier days, when reason has begun to dawn, they are considered as moral agents, and rewarded accord-

ing to their works: and we have good reason to hope, that sundry of them in their short space of life, are effectually prepared for a happy eternity. I have myself seen promising appearances of such early piety, in various places. And O! when shall I be so happy as to see many such appearances among the dear children and youth in my congregation? Why should not young sinners come to Christ from Hanover, as well as other places? Many of you lately heard from the lips of a very sincere and zealous preacher, the Rev. Mr. Robert Henry, Minister in Lunenburg, Virginia; that in his congregation near twenty youths, some of them not above nine or twelve years old, were under very promising impressions of religion, and earnestly pressing into the kingdom of God. And are not young sinners among us, as much concerned to come to Jesus, as in Lunenburg? Is sin only a local evil? Or is Jesus only a local Saviour? I mean, is not sin as pernicious an evil, and is not Jesus as needful and as amiable a Saviour in one place as another? O! my dear youth, shall other ministers have the pleasure of leading the tender lambs of their flocks to Jesus, while your poor minister is left to weep over you as the willing prey of sin and satan? Shall heaven be peopled with young immortals from other places, while the youth among us are crowding the slippery down-hill road to ruin? O! who can bear the thought! O! that you would suffer me this day to snatch you as brands out of the burning, before you catch fire, and blaze unquenchably!

I have another inducement of this kind to communicate to you, which is indeed the best piece of news I have heard this long time. It is in a letter I received two days ago from one of the best of men, and my favourite friend in Pennsylvania; I mean the Reverend Mr. Samuel Finley, tutor of a large academy (where some finish their education and others prepare themselves for the college) and one of the trustees of Nassau-Hall or New Jersey college, though residing above 100 miles from it: and I cannot communicate it to you



with more emphatical conciseness and simplicity than in his own words. His letter is an answer to one of mine, in which I had sent him some account I lately received from my British correspondents, of a remarkable revival of religion in England, especially among the clergy of the established church. He proceeds thus:—  
 "I thank you for the extracts from your English letter, &c. They raised my heavy heart a little while, and furnished materials for conversation. I greatly rejoice that the Lord Jesus has put it in my power to make you a large compensation for the good news you sent me. I can shew you greater things than even those, as they appear to me more unexampled and surprising. God has done great things for us, whereof we are glad. By this time you stand a tip-toe to discover what these glorious tidings are. Why no less than that our gracious Redeemer has poured out his holy spirit upon the students at our college, (i. e. the college of New-Jersey) not one, of all who were present, neglected; and they were in number sixty. The whole house, say my correspondents, was a *Bochim* (a place of weeping.) Mr. William Tennant, who was on the spot, says he never saw any in that case, who had more clear views of God, themselves, their defects, their impotence and misery, than they had in general—that there never was, he believes, in one house, more genuine sorrow for sin, and longing for Jesus—that this glorious work was gradual and spread like the increasing light of the morning—that is, was not begun by the ordinary means of preaching, nor promoted by alarming methods; yet so great was their distress, that he judged it improper to use any arguments of terror in public, lest some should sink under the weight—that what makes this gracious visitation the more remarkable was, that a little before some of the youth had given a greater loose to their corruptions than was ordinary among them: A spirit of pride and contention prevailing, to the great grief and even discouragement of the worthy President—that there was no public outcries,

but a decorous silent solemnity—that before he came away, several had received something like the spirit of adoption, being tenderly affected with a sense of redeeming love, and thereby disposed and determined to endeavour after universal holiness."

Mr. Treat, and Mr. G. Tennant tell me in theirs, that the concern appeared rational, solid, and scriptural, and that in a remarkable degree. I was informed by some of the Students, who had been my pupils, that this religious concern first began with the son of a very considerable gentleman of New-York. The youth was dangerously sick in college, and on that occasion awakened to a sense of his guilt: his discourse made some impression on a few others; and theirs again on others; and so it became almost general, before the good President, or any others knew any thing of it. As soon as it became public, misrepresentations were spread abroad, and some gentlemen sent to bring their sons home: but upon better information, the most were sent back again—The wicked companions of some young gentlemen left no methods untried to recover them to their former excess of riot; and with two or three they have been lamentably successful.

Mr. Duffield, a worthy young Minister, informed me the other day, that a very hopeful religious concern spread through the Jerseys, especially among young people. In several letters from Philadelphia, from Mr. G. Tennat, and others, I have assurance of a revival there, for which good people are blessing God. Lawyer Stockton informs me, that he is certified by good authority, of a gracious work of God at Yale-College, in New-Haven.

'Say now, my dear brother, are not these glorious things? are they not beyond expectation? can you believe for joy? Is it true that the Lord hath thus appeared? Or is it only a pleasing dream? It is true! it is a reality!

*Bound every Heart; and every bosom burn?*



This is the joyful news, my brethren, which I had to communicate to you; and I hope I received it in season, as a proper supplement to this discourse. Shall this excite you to emulation? You see religion is not the concern of the old, or the ignorant, or poor only. Here were *young* creatures—*scholars* in a college, where learning is carried to as great perfection already, as any where in America. Scholars, the sons of gentlemen of note and fortune; here these were made to mourn for sin, and cry and long for Jesus. And why will you not make this your concern?

But Oh! how vain are all my endeavours, while God withholds the influences of his spirit? The students in the college of New Jersey had heard many masterly, solemn, and pungent discourses from their worthy President, and many that preached occasionally to them: but all this had no effect. The work must not begin, till a sick boy becomes the instrument. This makes the finger of God more conspicuous, and shews that the "excellency of the power is his." Oh! if he would but please to pour out his spirit upon us, hard and dead as we are, we should soon relent and revive. Blessed spirit! descend into this valley of "dry bones, breathe on these slain, that they may live."

The agreeable piece of history I have communicated to you opens to us a very encouraging prospect with regard to posterity, and the churches in general. From the college of New Jersey, you and many other congregations expect supplies, when I and my brethren, who are now acting our part upon the stage of life, have made our exit, and are silent and forgotten in the dust. And when "the fountain is purified," we have reason to hope, that "pure streams" will issue from thence, to water the garden of God. O let us be thankful for so important and extensive a blessing.

— And now, my dear youth, I am just about taking leave of you: and therefore, I want you to come to some determination. You are the seed of the church:

and to you we look for the preservation of religion in this place, when its present supports are broken, and mouldered into dust. The world is arrived to an intolerable height of wickedness, and we long to see matters take a new turn. To you we look for this blessed revolution: for as to veteran sinners, they are so accustomed to do evil, that there is little more prospect of their reformation, than of "the Æthiopian's changing his skin, or the leopard his spots." You are in your tender forming age, most likely to receive good impressions. And now is the time when God is wont to display his grace in converting sinners. Young sinners are the materials he generally works upon. Your life is very uncertain, and if you do not now make religion your business, without delay, you may be in eternity, or you may be in hell, before you are aware. What a group of striking arguments is here? And O! shall none of them have any weight upon you?

Let me now conclude with a very reasonable request to my young friends; and that is, that as soon as you get home this evening, you would go by yourselves, though it were but for a quarter of an hour, and seriously think over what you have heard, and pray to God to bless it to you. My children and youth, your affectionate minister makes this petition to you; and were it necessary, would present it on his knees to the meekest of you. Spend a little time this evening in prayer, in examining whether ever you have come to Christ or not, and in meditating on the condition of your souls. Can you refuse a request so reasonable, and so interesting to yourselves! If you are hardy enough to do it, I should only warn you in the fatherly language of Solomon. You "will mourn at the last, and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me."



A

PLAIN AND SERIOUS

# ADDRESS

TO THE

MASTER OF A FAMILY,

ON THE

IMPORTANT SUBJECT

OF

## FAMILY RELIGION.

BY PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

HARTFORD:

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ADDRESS  
TO THE  
MASTER OF A FAMILY

AN  
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SIR,

YOU may easily apprehend, that the many interruptions to which personal visits are liable, make it difficult for Ministers to find a convenient time, in which they may apply themselves suitably and largely to those committed to their care; or at least, if they resolve to do it, will necessarily make their progress through large congregations very slow. I therefore take this method of visiting you *while alone*, and of addressing you on the very important subject of *Family-Religion*. For your own sake, and the sake of those dearest to you, I entreat you to give a calm attentive hearing. And I would particularly desire, that if it be by any means practicable, (as with a little contrivance and resolution I hope it may,) you would secure one hour on the morning of the Lord's Day after you receive it, not merely to run over this Letter in a cursory manner, but deliberately to weigh and consider it, and to come to some determination, as in the sight of God, that *you will*, or that *you will not*, comply with the *Petition* which it brings; if I may not rather say, with the *Demand* which in *His Name* it makes upon you.



As I purpose to deliver it to every Master of a Family under my stated care, or to every Mistress where there is no Master, (that no offence of any kind may be taken, which it is in my power to prevent,) I know it will come to many, who have long been exemplary for their diligence and zeal in the duties I am recommending; to many, whom their own experience hath instructed in the pleasures and advantages which flow from them; an experience which will enforce them more effectually than any thing which it is possible for me to say. Such will, I hope, by what they read, be confirmed in pursuing the good resolution they have taken, and the good customs they have formed; and will also be excited more earnestly to endeavor to contribute towards introducing the like, into other families over which they have any influence, and especially into those which may branch out from their own, by the settlement of children or servants. In this view, as well as to awaken their thankfulness to divine grace, which hath inclined them to the discharge of their duty in so great, yet so frequently neglected, an article of it, I hope the heads of praying families will not peruse this letter in vain. But it is intended as an address to those, who have hitherto lived in the omission of it: and if there were *but one* such master of a family unded my care, I would gladly submit to the labor in which I am now engaging *for his sake alone*. To such therefore I now turn myself; and Oh that divine grace might engage every one of such a character to hear me with attention, and might enforce upon his conscience the weight of reasons, the evidence of which the lowest may receive, and to which it is impossible that the highest should find any thing solid to object!

Oh my dear friend, whoever you are (for I know no one under my care to whom I may not address that appellation,) give me leave to tell you plainly, that while I write this I have that awakening scripture in

my view: *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon THE FAMILIES THAT CALL NOT ON THY NAME.\** I appeal to you as a man of ordinary sense and understanding (as it needs no more,) to judge whether this do not strongly imply that it may be taken for granted, *every family*, which is not a *heathen family*, which is not quite ignorant of the living and true God, *will call upon his name*. Well may it then pain my heart, to think that there should be a professedly *Christian family* whom this dreadful character suits. Well may it pain my heart, to think of the *divine fury*, which may be *poured out* on the heads and on the members of it: and well may it make me desirous, to do my utmost to secure you and yours, from every appearance, from every possibility of such danger. Excuse the earnestness with which I may address you. I really fear, lest *while you delay the fire* of the divine displeasure should *fall upon you*:\* and as I adore the patience of God in having thus long suspended the storm, I am anxious about every hour's delay, lest it should fall the heavier.

I will therefore, as plainly and seriously as I can, endeavour to convince you of your duty, if peradventure you are not already secretly convinced of it; as truly I believe, most who neglect it under the regular administration of gospel ordinances, are.—I will then touch on a few of those objections, which have been pleaded to excuse in some degree so shameful an omission.—And this will naturally lead me to conclude with a few hints, which may serve by way of direction, for the proper introduction and discharge of the services to which I am endeavouring to engage you.

I mean not to handle the subject at large, which would afford abundant matter for a considerable volume; as indeed several volumes have been written upon it, by divines of different denominations, who, however vari-

\* Jeremiah, x. 25.

\* Genesis, xix. 16, 17.



ous in other opinions, agree here; as what intelligent Christian can disagree? But I mean to suggest a few plain things, which it is evident you have not sufficiently considered, and which if duly weighed, may by the blessing of God answer my present purpose. Now the arguments I shall propose will be such, that if you will not regard them, little is to be hoped from any other: for surely the mind of man can discover none of greater and more universal importance; though I readily acknowledge, that many others might enforce them with greater energy and address. Yet if the desire, the most earnest desire of succeeding can add any of the proper arts of persuasion, they will not be wanting here. And I would fain speak, as one who considers, how much of the glory of God, how much of your own happiness, and that of your dear children, for time and eternity, depends on the success of what I am now to lay before you.

What I desire and intreat of you is, that you would honour and acknowledge God in your families, by calling them together every day, to hear some part of his word read to them, and to offer, for a few minutes at least, your united confessions, prayers, and praises to him. And is this a cause, that should need to be pleaded at large by a great variety of united motives? Truly the petition seems so reasonable, and a compliance with it from one who has not quite renounced religion might seem so natural, that one would think the bare proposing it might suffice. Yet experience tells us, it is much otherwise. This letter will come into the hands of some, who, though they maintain a public profession of religion, have been again and again exhorted to it in vain, and that perhaps for succeeding years. I might say a great deal to *upbraid* such, especially, on account of this neglect; but I rather chuse to intreat to the future performance of the duty; humbly hoping, that, criminal as former negligence has been, a gracious God will mercifully forgive it, to those who repent and desire to reform.

And Oh that I could engage you to this, by representing in the plainest, kindest, and most affectionate manner, the *reasonableness* and *advantage* of this duty for if it be reasonable, if it be evidently advantageous, there are numberless *general precepts of scripture*, which must comprehend and enforce it, if it were less immediately supported than it is by *particular passages*; which yet, as I shall presently shew, do many of them strongly recommend it to us.

Consider, Sir, for I address myself to every particular person, seriously consider the *apparent reasonableness of family religion*. Must not your consciences presently tell you, it is fit that persons who receive so many mercies together, should acknowledge them together? Can you in your own mind be satisfied, that you and your nearest relatives should pay no joint homage to that God, who hath set you in your family, and who hath given to you, and to the several members of it, so many domestic enjoyments? your creator and theirs, your preserver and theirs, your daily benefactor and theirs? Can it be right, if you have any sense of these things each of you in your own hearts, that the sense of them should be concealed and smothered there and that you should never join in your grateful acknowledgments to him? can you imagine it reasonable, that when you have a constant dependance upon him for so many mercies, without the concurrence of which your family would be a scene of misery, you should never present yourselves together in his presence, to ask them at his hand? Upon what principles is public worship to be recommended and urged, if not by such as have their proportionable weight here?

Indeed the force of these considerations hath not only been known and acknowledged by the people of God in all ages; we have not only *Noah* and *Abraham*, *Joshua* and *David*, *Job* and *Daniel*, each under a much darker dispensation than ours, as examples of it; but we may venture to say, that where ever there has been



a profession of any kind of religion, it has been brought into private houses as well as public temples. The poor *Heathens*, as we certainly know from the remaining monuments of them, had their *Lares* and their *Penates*, which were household images, some of them in private chapels, and others about the common hearth, where the family used to worship them by frequent prayers and sacrifices. And the *brass and wood, and stone*, of which they consisted, shall (as it were) *cry out against you*, shall rise up against you and condemn you if while you call yourselves the worshippers of the one living and eternal God, and boast in the Revelation you have received by his prophets and by his son, you presume to omit an homage, which the stupid worshippers of such vanities as these failed not to present to them, while they called them their Gods. Be persuaded then I beseech you, to be consistent in your conduct. Either give up all pretences to religion, or maintain a steady and uniform regard to it, at home as well as abroad, in the family as well as in the closet, or at church. But the reasonableness of this duty, and the obligations which bind you in conscience to the practice of it, will farther appear, if you consider,

The many advantages, which will by the divine blessing, attend a proper discharge of it. And here, I would more particularly represent the good influence, which family devotions are likely to have upon the young persons committed to your care—upon your own hearts—and upon the advancement of a general reformation, and the propagation of religion to those that are yet unborn.

Consider in the first place, what is most obvious, the happy influence which the duty I am recommending might have upon the young members of your family, the children and servants committed to your care. For I now consider you, as a parent, and a master. The father of a family is a phrase, that comprehends both these relations; and with great propriety, as humanity obliges

us to endeavor to take a parental care of all under our roof. And indeed,

You ought to consider your servants, in this view, with a tender regard. They are probably in the flower of life, for that is the age which is commonly spent in service; and you should recollect how possible it is, that this may be, if rightly improved, the best opportunity their whole life may afford them for learning religion, and being brought under the power of it. If your servants are already instructed in it, by being brought up in families where these duties have been maintained; let them not, if they should finally miscarry, have cause to impute it to you, and to testify before God in the day of their condemnation, “that it was under your roof that they learnt the neglect and forgetfulness of God and of all that their pious parents, perhaps in a much inferior station of life to you, had in earlier days been attempting to teach them; to teach them, in moments taken from labour, or from repose almost necessary for their subsistence.” On the other hand, if they came to you quite ignorant of religion, (as if they came from prayerless families, it is very probable that they do.) have compassion upon them, I entreat you, and endeavour to give them those advantages which they never yet had; and which it is too probable, as things are generally managed, they never will have, if you will not afford them.

But I would especially, if I might be allowed to borrow the pathetic words of *Job*,\* *intreat you by the Children of your own body*. I would now as it were present them all before you, and beseech you by all the bowels of parental affection, (which I have myself so strongly felt,) that to all the other tokens of tenderness and love, you would not refuse to add this, without which many of the rest may be worse than in vain. Give me leave to plead with you, as the instruments

\* *Job*, xix. 17.



of introducing them into being. Oh remember, it is indeed a debased and corrupted nature you have conveyed to them. Consider, that the world, into which you have been the means of bringing them, is a place in which they are surrounded with many temptations, and in which, as they advance in life, they must expect many more; so that in plain terms, it is on the whole much to be feared, that they will perish in the ignorance and forgetfulness of God, if they do not learn from you to love and serve him. For how can it be expected they should learn this at all, if you give them no advantages for receiving and practising the lesson at home?

And let me further urge and intreat you to remember that these dear children, whole tender age, and perhaps amiable forms and dispositions, might attract the affection and solicitude of strangers, are committed to your especial and immediate care by God their Creator. And he has made them thus dependent upon you and others that have in their infancy and childhood the care of them, that there might be hereafter a better opportunity of forming their minds, and of influencing them to a right temper and conduct. And can this by any means be effectually done, if you do not at proper times call them together, to attend to the instructions of the word of God, and to join in solemn prayers and supplications to him? At least is it possible, it should be done any other way with equal advantage, if this be not added to the rest?

Family worship is a most proper way of teaching children religion, as you teach them language, by insensible degrees; a little one day, and a little another; for to them *Line must be upon line, and precept upon precept.* They may learn to conceive aright of the divine perfections, when they hear you daily acknowledging and adoring them: their hearts may be early touched with pious remorse for sin when they hear your confessions poured out before God: they will

know what mercies they are to ask for themselves, by observing what turn your petitions take; your intercessions may diffuse into their minds a spirit of love to mankind, a concern for the interest of the church, and of their country; and what is not I think by any means to be neglected, sentiments of loyalty towards those in authority over us, when they hear you daily invoking the divine blessing upon them: and your solemn thanksgivings for the bounties of providence, and for benefits of a spiritual nature may affect their hearts with those gracious impressions towards the gracious author of all, which may excite in their little breasts love to him, the most noble and genuine principle of all true and acceptable religion. Thus they may become Christians by insensible degrees, and grow in the knowledge and love of the truth, as they do in stature.

By observing your reverent and solemn deportment (as reverent and solemn I hope it will always at such seasons be,) they may get some notion of an invisible being, before they are of age to understand the definition of the term *GOD*; and may feel their minds secretly impressed with an humble awe and veneration, before they can explain to you their sense of it. And whatever instructions you give them concerning his nature and his will, and the way of obtaining his favour by Jesus Christ all your admonitions relating to the importance of that invisible world we are going to, and the necessary preparation for it, will be greatly illustrated by the tenor of your daily devotions, as well as, by those excellent lessons which the word of God, when solemnly read to them morning and evening, will afford. Nor is it by any means to be forgotten, that while they hear themselves, and their own concerns, mentioned before God in prayer, while they hear you earnestly pleading for the divine blessing upon them, (especially if it be in expressions wisely varied, as some particular occurrences in their lives and



in yours may require) it may very probably be a means of moving their impressible hearts; as it may powerfully convince them of your deep and tender concern for their good, and may add great weight to the instructions you may address to them: so that it may appear, *even while you are praying for them, that God hears.\** And indeed I have known some instances of excellent persons, who have dated their conversion to God, even after they had begun visibly to degenerate, from the prayers, from the serious and pathetic prayers, which they have heard their pious fathers, perhaps I might add their pious mothers, presenting before God on their account.

Indeed were this duty properly attended to, it might be expected that all Christian families would, according to their respective sizes and circumstances, become nurseries of piety; and you would see in the most convincing view, the wisdom of Providence, in making human infants so much more dependent on their parents, and so much more incapable to shift for themselves, than the offspring of inferior creatures are.

Let me then intreat you, my dear friend, to look on your children the very next time you see them, and ask your own heart, how you can answer it to God, and to them, that you deprive them of such advantages as these? advantages, without which it is to be feared, your care of them in other respects will turn to but little account, should they be ever so prosperous in life. For what is prosperity in life without the knowledge, and fear, and love of God? what but the poison of the soul, which swells and kills it? what, but the means of making it more certainly, more deeply, more intolerably miserable when all its transient and empty amusements are passed away, *like a dream when one awaketh?*† In short not to mention the happy influence it may have on their temporal affairs, by draw-

\* *Psa. lxxv. 4.*† *Psa. lxxviii. 20.*

ing down the divine blessing, and by forming their minds to those virtues, which pave the way to wealth and reputation, health and contentment; which make no enemies, and attract many friends; it is, with respect to the eternal world, the greatest cruelty to your children thus to neglect giving them those advantages, which *no other cares in education itself* exclusive of these can afford: and it is impossible, you should ever be able to give them any other equivalent. If you do your duty in this respect, they will have reason to bless your living and dying; and if you neglect it, take care that you and they come not, in consequence of that neglect, into a world, where (horrid as the thought may now seem.) you will for ever be cursing each other. And thus I am falling insensibly, because so naturally, from what I was saying of the concern and interest of those under your care, to your own, so far as it may be distinguished from theirs.

Let me therefore press you to consider, how much *your own interest* is concerned in the matter; the whole of your interest, both spiritual and temporal.

Your *spiritual interest* is infinitely the greatest, and therefore I will begin with that. And here let me seriously ask you, do you not need those advantages for religion, which the performance of family duty will give you, added to those of a more secret and a more public nature, if preadventure they are regarded by you? these instructions, these adorations, these confessions, these supplications, these intercessions, these thanksgivings, which may be so useful to your children and servants, may they not be useful to yourselves? may not your own hearts have some peculiar advantage for being impressed, when you are the mouth of others in these domestic devotions, beyond what in a private station of life it is otherwise possible you should have? Oh these lessons of religion to your own souls, every morning and evening, might be (if I may be allowed the expression,) either the seed or fore-



tate, of salvation to you. Nay, the remoter influence they may have on your conduct, in other respects, and at other times, when considered merely in the general as religious exercises performed by you in your family, is to be recollected as an argument of vast importance.

A sense of common decency would engage you if you pray with your family to *avoid a great many evils*, which would appear *doubtly evil* in a father or a master, who kept up such religious exercises in his house. I will not now, sir, speak of yourself, for I would not offend by supposing any thing grossly bad of you. But do you imagine, that if reading the Scripture and family prayer were introduced into the houses of some of your neighbours, drunkenness, and lewdness, and cursing and swearing, and profaning the Lord's day, would not, like so many *evil Demons*, be quickly driven out! the master of the family would not for shame indulge them, if he had nothing more than the form of duty kept up; and his reformation, though only external, and at first on a kind of constraint, would carry with it the reformation of many more, who have such a dependence on his favour as they would not sacrifice, though by a madness very prevalent among the children of men they can venture to sacrifice their souls to every trifle.

And may it not perhaps be your more immediate concern, to recollect, that if you prayed with your family, you would yourself be more careful to *abstain from all appearance of evil*?\* You would find out a way to suppress that turbulency of passion, which may now be ready to break out before you are aware, and other imprudences, in which your own heart would check you by saying, "Does this become one, that is by and by to kneel down with his domestics, his children and servants, and adore God with them, and pray against

\* 1 Thes. v. 22.

every thing which displeases God, and makes us unfit for the heavenly world?" I will not say this will cure every thing that is wrong; but I believe you are already persuaded, it would often have a very good influence. And I fear, it is the secret desire of indulging some irregularities without such a restraint, that, infamous as such a victory is, hath driven out family prayer from several houses where it was once maintained, and hath excluded it from others. But if you have any secret disinclination of heart rising against it in this view it becomes you seriously to take the alarm for, to speak plainly, I have hardly known a blacker symptom of damnation than a fear of being restrained in the commission of sin.

After this it may seem a matter of smaller importance, to urge the good influence which a proper discharge of family duty may have upon your own temporal affairs; both by restraining you from many evils, and engaging you to a proper conduct yourself, and by impressing your children and servants with a sense of religion. And it is certain, the more careful they are of their duty to God the more likely they will be to perform their duty to you. Nor can any thing strengthen your natural authority among them more, than your presiding in such solemnities, if supported by a suitable conduct. But I would hope, nobler motives will have a superior weight. And therefore waving this topic, I intreat you as the last argument to consider,

The influence it may have on a general reformation and on the propagation of religion to those who are yet unborn. You ought to consider every child and servant in your family, as one who may be a source, not only of life, but (in some degree) of character and happiness, to those who are hereafter to arise into being; yea, whose conduct may in part affect those that are to descend from them in the following generation. If they grow up, while under your eye, ignorant of



religion, they will certainly be much less capable of teaching it to others; for these are the years of discipline, and if they be neglected now, their is little probability of their receiving after instruction. Nor is this all the evil consequence; for it is highly probable, that they will think themselves authorised by your example to a like negligence, and so you may entail heathenism under disregarded Christian forms, on your descendents and theirs in ages to come. Whereas your diligence and zeal might be remembered, and imitated by them, perhaps when you are in your grave; and the stock which they first received from you might with rich improvements be communicated to great numbers, so that one generation after another might learn to fear and serve the Lord. On the whole, God only knows what a church may arise from one godly family, what a harvest may spring up from a single seed; and on the other hand, it is impossible to say, how many souls may at length perish by the treacherous neglect of a single person, and to speak plainly, by your own.

These, sir, are the arguments I had to plead with you, and which I have selected out of many more: and now give me leave seriously to ask you, as in the presence of God, whether there be not on the whole an unanswerable force in them? and if there be, what follows, but that you immediately yield to that force, and set up family worship this very day. For me thinks, I would hardly thank you for a resolution to do it to-morrow, so little do I expect from that resolution. How can you excuse yourself in the continued omission? Bring the matter before God. He will be the final judge of it; and if you cannot debate the question as in his presence, it is a sign of a bad cause, and of a bad heart too; which is conscious of the badness of the cause, and yet will not give it up, nor comply with a duty, of your obligations to which you are secretly convinced, and yet in effect say, "I will go on

in this sin, and venture the consequence." Oh it is a dreadful venture, and will be found in effect provoking the Lord to jealousy, as if you were stronger than he.\*

But perhaps there may arise in your mind some objections, which may in some degree break the force of this conviction, and which in that view it may be expedient for me to discuss a little, before I dismiss the subject and close my address to you. You may perhaps be ready to object,

1. "That family prayer is not in so many words commanded in scripture; and therefore however expedient in some cases, it cannot be so universal and so important a duty, as we represent it."

I answer plainly, that it is strongly recommended in scripture, and consequentially commanded; as there are precepts, which plainly include, though they do not particularly express it. And I appeal to yourself in this matter. When God is represented as giving this reason to his angels for a particular favour to be bestowed on Abraham because *he knew that he would command his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, that he might obtain the blessing promised* † did he not intend to declare his approbation of the care he took to support religion in his family? and can it be supported in a total neglect of prayer?—Again, do you not in your conscience think that the spirit of God meant, that we should take Joshua for an example, when he tells us, that he resolved, and publicly declared the resolution, *that he and his house would serve the Lord* ‡ which must express a religious care of his family too?—Do you not believe that this blessed spirit meant it as a commendation of Job, that he *offered sacrifices for all his children* § sacrifices, undoubtedly attended with prayers; when he feared lest the gaiety of their hearts in their successive feastings, might

\* 1 Cor. x. 22. † Gen. xviii. 19. ‡ Josh. xxiv. 15. § Job i. 5.



have betrayed them into some moral evil?—And was it not to do an honour to David, that the scripture informs us, that he *went home to bless his household*; that is, to perform some solemn act of domestic worship when he had been spending the whole day in public devotions? what think you of the example of Daniel, who *prayed in his house with his windows open toward Jerusalem* † and would rather run the risk of being cast into the den of lions, and being torn in pieces by those cruel beasts, than he would either omit or conceal it? And do you think, that when our blessed Lord, whose whole life was employed in religious services, so frequently *took his disciples apart to pray with them*, that he did not intend this as an example to us, of praying with those under our special care, or in other words, with the members of our own family, who are most immediately so?—Or can you by any imaginable artifice delude yourself so far as to think, that when we are solemnly charged and commanded to pray *with all prayer and supplication* ‡ this kind of prayer is not included in that apostolical injunction?

On the whole, the question lies in a very little room. Have I proved by what I have said before, that *family prayer* is a reasonable thing? That it has a tendency to promote the honour of God, and the interest of religion, and your own salvation, with that of those who are committed to your care? If you are really convinced of this, then all the general precepts which require the love of God and your neighbour, all that recommend a regard to the interest of Christ, and a concern for our own everlasting happiness, bind it in this connection as certainly upon us, as if it had been commanded in words as express as those in which we are required ‖ *to enter into our closets, and there to pray to our Father which is in secret.*

‡ 2 Sam. vi. 20.—† Dan. vi. 10.—‡ Eph. vi. 18.—‖ Matt. vi. 6.

And I will farther add that if the care of *family religion* be, (as I suppose every man's conscience will secretly testify that it is,) a proper part of a *religious education*, then all those many passages of scripture which recommend this, must in all reason be understood as including that. But perhaps you may be ready to plead,

2 “That it is *generally neglected.*”

Yet scarce can you have made or thought of this objection, but you will see at the first glance, that this must turn upon yourself, rather than on the whole appear favourable to you cause. It is the reproach of our age, if it be indeed *generally neglected*. And if it be generally excluded from the families of the rich and the great, (who too frequently set the fashion, where they are most apt to set it wrong,) let it rather awaken a generous indignation in our breast, to think that it is so excluded. At least let it awaken a holy zeal to exert ourselves so much the more, as it is certain, that no association in vice can secure those that join in it: for it is expressly said, *though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.\** So will your obedience be the more acceptable in proportion to the degree in which it is singular. Were there not one praying family in the whole nation, in the whole world, methinks it should instigate you to the practice, rather than tempt you to the neglect, and you should press on as ambitious of the glory of *leading the way*: for what could be a nobler object of ambition, than to be pointed out by the blessed God himself, as Job was; of whom he said, with a kind of triumph, *Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the land, or even on the Earth?†* But blessed be God, this supposed *universal neglect* is far from being the case. Let it however rejoice us, if God may say, “There are such and such families, distinguishable from those in the neigh-

\* Prov. xi. 21. † Job i. 8.



bourhood on this account; as prevalent as the neglect of *family prayer* is, they have the resolution to practise it, and, like my servant Daniel, fear not the reproach and contempt which profane and ungodly men may cast upon them, if they may but honour me and engage my favour: *I know them; I hearken and hear, and a book of remembrance is written before me for them that fear me, and think on my name.*\* Nor should you urge,

3. "That you have so much business of another kind, as not to be able to attend to this."

I might cut the objection short at once, by applying to your conscience, whether you have not time for many other things, which you know to be of much less importance. How many hours in a week do you find for amusement, while you have none for devotion in your family? And do you indeed hold the blessing of God so very cheap, and think it a matter of so little importance, that you conclude your business must succeed the worse, if a few minutes were daily taken solemnly to seek it together? let me rather admonish you, that the greater your business is, the more need you have to pray earnestly, that your hearts may not be engrossed by it. And I would beg leave further to remind you, that if your hurry of business were indeed so great as the objection supposes, (which I believe is seldom the case,) prudence alone might suggest, that you should endeavour to contract it. For there are certain boundaries, beyond which a wise and faithful care cannot extend; and as an attempt to go beyond those boundaries has generally its foundation in avarice, it often has its end in poverty and ruin. But if you were ever so secure of succeeding for this world, how dear might you and your children pay for that success, if all the blessed consequences of *family religion*, for time and for eternity, were to be given up as the price of that very small

\* *Mal. iii. 16.*

part of your gains, which is owing to the minutes you take from these exercises, that you give them to the world? For you plainly perceive the question is only about *them*, and by no means about a strenuous application to the proper duties of your secular calling through the day. And if you *will be rich* upon such *profane terms* as are here supposed, (for truly I can call them no better than *profane*.) you will probably *plunge yourself into final perdition*, and may in the mean time *pierce yourself through with many sorrows*;\* while religious families learn by blessed experience, that *the blessing of the Lord* which they are so often imploring together *maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it* † or that *a little with the fear of the Lord is better than great treasure, with that intermingled trouble* ‡ which in the neglect of God must necessarily be expected. But I conclude that yet more will be objecting,

4. "That they want ability for a work of this kind."

To this I must in the first place reply, that where the heart is rightly disposed, it does not require any *uncommon abilities* to discharge family worship in a decent and edifying manner. *The heart of a wise and good man*, in this respect, *teacheth his mouth, and addeth knowledge to his lips* § and *out of the fullness of it*, when it is indeed full of pious affections, *the mouth will, naturally, speak* || And if it speak naturally, and in the main properly, it is enough. There is no need at all of speaking elegantly. The plainest and simplest language, in addresses to the majesty of heaven, appears to me far preferable to laboured, pompous, and artificial expressions. Plain short sentences, uttered just as they rise in the mind, will be best understood by them that join with you. And it should on such occasions be our endeavour to let ourselves down, as much as possible, to the understanding of the least and meanest

\* *1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.* † *Prov. x. 22.* ‡ *Prov. xv. 16.*

§ *Prov. xvi. 23.*

|| *Luke vi. 45.*



of them: and this will in itself be more pleasing to God, than any thing which should proceed from ostentation and parade.

I must also desire you to consider, how many helps you may easily procure. The scripture is a large and noble magazine of the most proper sentiments, and most expressive language; which, if you will attend to with a becoming regard, will soon furnish you for every good word and work, and most apparently for this. And besides this, we have in our language a great variety of excellent forms of prayer, for families as well as for private persons; which you may use, at least at first, with great profit. And if it be too laborious to you to learn them by heart, or if having learnt them you dare not trust your memory, what should forbid your reading them reverently and devoutly? I hope I shall give no offence to any good Christian by saying but on this occasion I should offend my conscience by not saying, that I have long thought an irreconcilable aversion to forms of prayer, even of human composition, as vain a superstition, as a passionate attachment to them. And if any had rather, that a family should be prayerless, than that a well chosen form should be gravely and solemnly read in it, I think he judges as absurdly, as if he would rather see them starving to death, than fed out of a dish whose materials or shape are disagreeable to him. The main thing is, that God be reverently and sincerely adored, that suitable blessings, temporal and spiritual, be sought from him for ourselves and others, and cordial thanksgivings returned to him for the various gifts of his continual bounty: and if this be done, the circumstances of doing it, though I cannot think them quite indifferent, are comparatively of small importance. I know by sure experience, in a great variety of instances, that it is very possible for Christians of no extraordinary genius, and with a very low education, to acquit themselves honourably in prayer without the assistance of

forms: and they who at first need them may, and probably, if they seriously set about it, would soon outgrow that need. But if they did not, God might be glorified, and families edified, by the continued use of such helps. And on the whole, if it be indeed come to this, that you would rather sacrifice all the benefits of family prayer, than submit to the trouble of reading, or appointing another to read, a well composed address which perhaps, with a small portion of scripture before it, might not take up one quarter of an hour's time, indeed, you must be condemned by God, and your own conscience. In such a view both must testify, that it is neither want of leisure, nor want of ability, that prevents your discharging your duty, but a stupid indifference about it, or rather a wretched aversion to it; the natural consequence of which might, if a little reflected upon, be sufficient to throw the most careless and arrogant sinner into an awful alarm, if not a trembling consternation.

I apprehend, that the most plausible objections have now been canvassed; for I suppose, few will be so weak and cowardly, as to plead,

5. "That their domestics will not submit to the introduction of such orders as these."

But as this may be secretly thought of, where it would not be pleaded, especially where these duties have unhappily been omitted, when families were first formed, and in their most flexible and pliant state, I will bestow a few words on this head.

And here I must desire, that you would not rashly conclude this to be the case, with respect to your own. Do not think so unkindly of your domestics, if they be not extremely wicked indeed, as to imagine they would be secretly discontented with spending a little time daily in hearing the word of God, and being present at your domestic devotion; much less should you allow yourself to think, till it appears in fact, that they will have the arrogance openly to dispute so reasona-



ble a determination as this. Perhaps on the contrary they are even now secretly wishing, that God would put it into your heart to make the attempt; and thinking with a kind of tender regret, "why are we denied such a blessing, when the members of this and that family in the neighborhood are favoured with it?"

But if it be indeed as you suppose, that they would think of it with a secret aversion and come into it with apparent reluctance, if they can be induced to come into it at all; you would do well to reflect, whether this profaneness may not, in a great measure at least, be owing to that very neglect which I am now pressing you to reform? which if it be, it ought certainly to convince you in the most powerful and effectual manner, of the necessity of endeavouring to repair as soon as possible the mischief already done. And if there be really an *opposition*, you ought to let any in whom you discover it know, that your measures are fixed, and that you *cannot* and *will not* resign that just authority, which the laws of God and Man give you in your own house, to the petulancy of their humour, or the impiety of their unhappy temper. Make the trial, whether they will dare to break with you, rather than submit to so easy a condition, as that of being present at your hours of family worship. If it be a *servant* that disputes it, you will no doubt think it a great blessing to your family to rid it of so detestable a member, in that relation. And if it be a *child*, grown up to years that should be years of discretion, that sets himself against this reformation, (and it is not possible that any others should *oppose* you,) though it is certain, that wherever such a *son of Belial* be, he must be a great grief to your heart, you will be delivered from a great deal of distress which the sight of his wickedness must daily give you, by refusing him a place in your own family, which he would only disgrace and corrupt, and leaving him to practice those irregularities and scandal's

which always go along with such a presumptuous contempt of religion, any where else than under your own roof.

I can think of but one objection more, and that is

6. "That you may not know *how* to introduce a practice which you have so long neglected."

But this is an objection so very soon removed, that I hope, if nothing else lies in the way, your family will not continue another week in the unhappy circumstances in which your negligence has hitherto kept it. I were unworthy the name of a minister of the gospel, if whatever my other engagements are, I were not willing to give you my utmost assistance, as soon as possible, in so good a work as the reformation of this great and lamentable evil. Far from thinking it a trouble to visit you, and spend an hour with you upon such an occasion; who would not esteem it a refreshment, and a blessing to come and inform your domestics, when gathered together for this purpose, how wise and happy a resolution you had taken, to represent the reason they have to rejoice in it, and to bless God who had inspired you with it? and how sweet a work would it be to perform it, as for the first time, imploring the blessings of providence and grace on you and yours, and intreating those assistances of his holy spirit, which may qualify you more abundantly for discharging your peculiar part in it, and may render it the successful means of planting, or of supporting and animating, a principle of true religion in every soul under your care? nor would the joy and delight be confined, to the minutes spent with you at such a season: It would be carried home to the study, and to the house of God; and the very remembrance of it would for years to come, encourage to other attempts of usefulness, and strengthen our hands in the work of the Lord.

And Oh my dear friend, whoever you are, be not ashamed, that a minister should on this occasion tell your children and servants, that you are sensible of



your former neglect, and are determined in the strength of God to practice a duty, which it has indeed been criminal hitherto to omit. This is a mean and unworthy shame, and would prevent our reforming evils, which are indeed shameful. It will be a glory to you, to be willing and solicitous to revive languishing religion; a glory, to give to other families an example, which, if they have the wisdom and courage to follow, it will undoubtedly bring down a rich variety of blessings on themselves, and if followed by considerable numbers, on the public. At least, it will be an honour to you in the sight of men, and what is infinitely more, in the sight of God, to have made the generous effort; and not to make the guilty neglect of former years, an excuse for continuing to neglect what it should rather be a powerful argument immediately to practice.

But I would by no means insist upon it, that divine worship should be introduced into your family in the particular manner I have recommended. Use your own judgment, and pursue your own inclination; so that it be but effectually and immediately done. You may perhaps think it convenient to call them together, and read over *this letter* to them: telling them at the conclusion, that you are in your conscience convinced there is reason in it which cannot be answered, and that therefore you are resolved to act agreeably to it. You may then proceed to read a portion of scripture, and to pray with them in such a manner as you may think most expedient. But in whatever manner it be done, you will remember that it must be with reverence and solemnity, and with unfeigned fervour of devotion, as in the sight of the heart searching God. And you will farther remember, that when once introduced, it must be resolutely and constantly carried on: for to cast but this heavenly guest, will in some degree be more shameful, than not to admit it. But I hope sweet experience of the pleasure of these duties will be instead of a

thousand arguments, to engage your adherence to them. May God give you resolution *immediately* to make the attempt? and may he assist and accept you and scatter down every desirable blessing of providence and of grace, on you and yours: so that *this day*, (for I hope it will be introduced this very day,) may become memorable in your lives, as a season from whence you may date a prosperity and a joy hitherto unknown, how happy soever you may have been in former years; for very imperfect, I am sure, must that domestic happiness be, in which domestic religion has no part.

How shall I congratulate myself, if in consequence of the representation and address I have now been making to you, I may be the blessed instrument in the divine hand of inspiring you with such a resolution! what an additional bond will then be added to our friendship, while God continues us, together in life! yea, what an everlasting bond of a nobler friendship, in a future state; where it will be, before the throne of God, my joy to have given such admonitions as these, and yours, faithfully and obediently to have received them!

But if after all you will not be persuaded, but will hearken to the voice of cowardice, and sloth, and irreligion, in defiance of so many awakening and affecting reasons, you must answer it at large. If your children and servants grow up in the neglect of God, and pierce your heart with those sorrows, which such servants, and especially such children, are like to occasion; if they raise profane and profligate families; if they prove the curse of their country, as well as the torment and ruin of those most intimately related to them; the guilt is in part yours, and (I repeat it again) you must answer it to God at the great day, that you have omitted the proper and appointed method of preventing such fatal evils. In the mean time, you must answer the omission to your own conscience; which probably has



not been easy in former days, and in future days may be yet more inquiet. Yes, sir, the memory of this address may continue to torment you if it cannot reform you: and if you do not forsake the house of God as well as exclude God and his worship from your own house, you will meet with new wounds; for new exhortations and admonitions will arm reflection with new reproaches. And in this uncomfortable manner you will probably go on, till what has been the grief and shame of your life, become the affliction of your dying bed; nor dare I presume to assure you, that God will answer your last cries for pardon. The best you can expect under the consciousness of this guilt is, to pass trembling to your final doom:—But whatever that doom be, you must acquit your minister who has given you this faithful warning; and this letter, transcribed as it were, in the records of the divine omniscience, shall testify, that a matter of so great importance hath not been wholly neglected, hath not been coldly and slightly urged by,

*Dear sir, your affectionate friend,  
and faithful servant in our common Lord,*

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton, December 20. 1740.

FINIS.

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J. Lithbridge	Horace Orcott	Justus Pasco
Heber Whiton.		

## SPRINGFIELD, (MASS.)

Calvin Gay.

## WEST SPRINGFIELD, (MASS.)

Hannah Todd.

## TOLLAND.

Azariah Benton	Simon Chapman, jr.	Samuel Darby
Joseph Howard	Russell Horton	Joseph Hatch
John Kingsbury	Ariel Ladd	Stephen Hatch
Laura Ladd	Rev. Ansel Nash	Joel Pinney
Ami Paulk	Elijah Smith	Amasa Sessions
Ashbel Steele	David Dorchester	Ephraim West
Thomas West.		

## VERNON.

Mary Alderman	Curtis Crane	Alpheus Chapman
Elijah Chapman	Solomon Carpenter	Hannah Driggs
Wareham Grant	Augustus Grant	Dianthe Grant
Anne Grant	Elijah Hammond	Oliver Hunt, jr.
Eli Hammond	Ebenezer Hunt	Erastus Hunt
Oliver King	Elijah Lee	Charles Lee
Francis M'Lean	Alex'r M'Lean	Erastus M'Collum
Polly Pearl	Joshua Pearl	Reuben Skinner
David Smith	Roswell Smith	David Smith, jr.
L. P. Tinker	Justus Talcott	Hope Tucker
John Walker.		

## WILLINGTON.

Jesse Daggett	Augustus Edwards	Joseph Holt
Ebenezer Heath	Cyril James	Rev. H. Loomis, &
Samuel Merrick	John Mills	Joseph Merrick,
J. Merrick, 2d.	Oliver Pearl	Walter Pearl
Thomas Taylor	R. Woodworth	John Weston.

## WEATHERSFIELD.

Amele Andrus	Elizabeth Boardman	Joseph Boardman
Anna Camp	Alma Clark	Abigail Crane
Hannah Carter	George Coleman	John Churchill
Wm. Demming	S. Demming	A. Demming
Roswell Hunter	Benjamin Hart	Samuel Harrison
Sally Hudson	Nath'l Hulbert	Martin Kellogg
Gurdon Montague	Eben'r P. Owen	George Rhodes



Selah Rhodes	Josiah Rhodes	Henry Ryer
Ma'us Rash	Jonathan Stoddard	Beulah Stoddard
Edward Shepard	Daniel Willard	John Warner, jr.
John Wheeler	Simeon Wells	Jehiel Robbins.

## WINDSOR.

Eunice Alford	Thomas Barber	Jonathan Bidwell
Nath'l Bidwell	J. Buu'stead	Martin Denslow
Delia Frost	Enoch Frisbie	Jacob Gillet
Isaac Hayden	Levi Hayden	Peter Moore
Joab Owen	Isaac Owen	William Phelps
Betsey Phelps	Ezekiel Palmer	Calvin Riley
Alvey Rowland	R. Sheldon	Harvy Thrall
Sally Fuller	Eleanor Wilson	C. Stoughton.
Elizabeth Wilson.		

## EAST WINDSOR.

Lemuel Bissell	Julus Birge	Eli Bissell
Abel Barnes	Oliver Cook	Benjamin Cook
Roswell Ely	John French	Aaron Grant
Epaphras Grant	Stephen Gibbs	Joel King
Amasa Loomis 3	Nathan Lyman	Horatio Noble
Reuben Olcott	Hosea Osborn	William Phelps
Joseph Phelps	Abner Reed	Elijah F. Reed
John Stoughton	James Trumbull	Asaph Willard
Anson Watson	Betsey Watson.	

## WATERTOWN.

Joseph Edwards.

## WILBRAHAM, (MASS.)

Noah Alden	Lothrop Burt	Stephen Dorman
Wm. Eaton	Ambrose Fuller	Eben'r Hathaway
Samuel Langdon	Paul Langdon	Walter Langdon
Edward Morris	John Merrick	Alvin Newton
Moses E. Newton	Stephen Newell	Joseph Russell
Luther Stebbins	Calvin Stebbins	Elisha Torrey
Elijah Torrey, jr.	Rev. M. Warren	Solomon Wright.
Samuel Chapin.		

## WINDHAM.

Alex'r M. Kinney.







