

THE FAMILY

▲

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION;

OR

HEAVEN ITS MODEL.

by
Erastus Hopkins

If ye love me, keep my commandments.—*John* xiv. 15.

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HEAVEN THE MODEL
OF
A CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

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PREFACE.

It is, by no means, a just impression with regard to every subject, that it becomes exhausted, or necessarily irksome, in proportion to the frequency with which it is treated. The polish of the marble will continue the same under the hands of successive workmen, until the very stone itself be gone. The lustre of the gold cannot be effaced by attrition. And so with many subjects on which our minds may act. They are incapable of exhaustion. They are invested with a deep and permanent interest, even though no new beauty be discovered, and no new truth be brought to light.

If the author judges right, the subject which he attempts to treat in the following pages is of the class described. It is common; but from its very nature and relations it can never be divested of deep interest and profit, while the parental relation continues, and especially while there are christian parents to look upon their little ones as entering upon an immortal career.

Home is a precious sanctuary; and the influences that are active there are of incalculable importance. That state of society which fosters a just appreciation of the family relation, and causes its privileges and joys to be

prized and preserved in the greatest purity, is one most to be desired. The quiet of a rural village is generally more favorable to healthful family influences, and to the inviolateness of the household sanctuary, than the excitement of a commercial place. Whatever tends to divert the thoughts or the presence of parents or children away from their own firesides, and send them elsewhere for greater enjoyment, tends seriously to infringe the power and the benefits of the family.

Let those who have gone from the quiet places of their youth, where they were educated, amid the sacred restraints and endearments of a well-ordered rural home, and are now resident, with their own growing households, in the midst of some more bustling town, or in the bosom of some vast and whirling metropolis—let them look back and contrast the home of their own youthful days with the present home of their children, and they cannot fail to see the peculiar advantages of the former, and the besetting snares of the latter. Amid the ten thousand diversions of the city, frequently operating, alike upon parents and children, either drawing them from their own evening circles, or interrupting their hallowed quiet, by the infusion of countless frivolities, there is imminent danger that household bonds will become extensively weakened—that parental influence will become circumscribed—that the home of youth will be poisoned, and the *foundations of society become out of course.*

These dangers are somewhat proportionate, in any community, to the prevalence of a commercial spirit, with its many exciting and diverting influences. When have we heard of infidelity nurtured and growing strong

amid rural hamlets; and when have we seen it there raising its destructive arm to strike down the family institution, and destroy the tender ties of connubial and parental and filial love? Never. These relations are too sacred there, where all that is most precious in memory is associated with the humble homes of youth. But it is in those communities where external excitements and influences have supplanted or corrupted the more genial bonds and restraints of home, where associations of delight cluster, less and less exclusively, around the retired domestic circle—it is there that infidelity is conceived, and rears its head, and utters its iron voice of war upon all that virtue holds dear. And wherever there exists a diversion of interest and attachment from the quiet scenes of home, there the most noxious influences more easily prevail, and there is an easy tendency to all that is corrupt and desolate.

But it is manifest that the whole world is assuming a more busy, excited aspect. The quiet of past ages seems to have given away to the commercial enterprise and busy spirit that, on every hand, is becoming prevalent. The causes of external excitement are increasing, and, along with them, the current seems to set from, rather than to, the domestic circle, and parental influences are in danger of being overwhelmed. These causes are not confined to populous places, but they stretch out with our rail-roads and canals, by our newspapers and lecturers, into the hitherto most retired portions of our country. There are more things out of doors, and fewer things within doors. The ends of the earth are brought together. Exciting topics of intelligence are borne to us on the wings of every wind. Commerce receives a new

impulse and opens new temptations. Men are brought more into contact with those to whom they are strangers. Thus the sight of father and mother and home is in danger of becoming obsolete amid the thousand new things that are crowding on the minds, and awakening the wonder and the enterprise and ambition of the vigorous and the young.

It cannot justly excite our astonishment, then, to find the value of home depreciated, its influences weakened, and its restraints less regarded. Sons often seem to look upon the parental abode as the place of mere boarding and lodging, and the opportunities of parental inspection, and the culture of those social feelings which chasten and sweeten life, become circumscribed to the few fleeting moments of a hurried repast. And thus becomes formed a taste for every thing abroad, and for but little at home.

It is for this taste that Satan is ready and diligent to provide. And hence are set on foot shows, convivialities, plays, and entertainments, in countless multitude, to crowd on the distracted attention, and to steal even the hours of needful quiet and repose—to do their part in turning men loose from home, and breaking those hallowed social bonds which are the strong guards of virtue, and among the firmest barriers to vice. All these things come of those new and rapid developments of society, which have occurred in recent years, and the progress of which is to be more and more astonishing.

To give these tendencies a more healthful direction, lyceums, literary associations, and kindred institutions of various kinds have been laudably set on foot, and, so far as wisely regulated, tend to impart correctness to

public taste, and a more elevated tone to public morals. But while these institutions may be made subservient of great good, they can never prove an equivalent to those hallowed associations of home, the absence of which can never be compensated. And it may be also partially attributable to the same cause that there has been, of late years, a remarkable multiplication of religious services, that this awakened public attention, that goes so instinctively forth from home for its food and enjoyment, may find provided some healthful spiritual banquets. But it behooves us to guard, lest, while we seek lawfully to accommodate ourselves to these tendencies, we should seem to give them too great a sanction. And we are not to overlook, that one tendency of these multiplied religious services (we may be allowed to point out their *dangers*, without being understood to speak their *condemnation*.) may be to draw attention away from the RELIGIOUS DUTIES OF THE FAMILY—to lessen pious watchfulness and instructions there, and to let down that high tone of sacred importance which should ever attach to the strict RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF THE FAMILY CIRCLE. Parents are to be the chief cultivators of the household soil, and it is in vain for them to think that, with profit, they can, either to the teacher or the preacher, “*farm out*” the spiritual interests of their children. And how often do we witness a species of this error, and see parents bringing their little ones within the reach of the more public instrumentalities, that they may receive there the tender impressions which they have failed to receive at home. And when childhood has become merged in youth, we see again these same unwilling children thrust into the sanctuary to be submitted to the

exorcisms of some Boanerges, or the excitement of some wonderful measures, that those results may be produced, which might have been more reasonably looked for as the fruits of a wise and diligent domestic training, during the season of early childhood.

That this hasty sketch of the present state and tendencies of society is generally correct, the author thinks will be freely admitted. It may augment the fears of many that society is on the eve of trying times, and that the strength of the powers of darkness will triumph, more than ever, over all that Piety holds dear. If these evils (some may reason) have crept over the present generation, many of whose living parents are themselves the descendants of better times, what is to become of society, and household virtue and restraint, when the children of this more corrupt generation are, in turn, the parents of those that are to come, and when the golden days of more quiet times, and stronger family ties have passed to be remembered as fables? Let us look at this, not with despondency and fear, but in the spirit of christian hope, and confidence, and aroused action. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself"—i. e. makes suitable preparation against the day of its coming.

But how shall we effect this? Shall we attempt to stay the causes of all these changes, and to reinstate the security of more ancient times by lessening the temptations of the present? Shall we, as a religious community, set our faces against all the improvements of the age? Shall we clip the wings of commerce? Shall we dry up the resources of ingenuity, and place our ban upon the spring-tide of prosperity? Shall we demolish our rail-roads and fill up our canals, and depopulate our

towns and cities, and attempt to *forbid* that many shall "go to and fro in the earth and knowledge be increased?" because, forsooth, these things bring with them a vast amount of excitement and temptation, and seem to threaten the serious injury or ruin of some of our most cherished and important religious institutions! By no means. We are only witnessing a new *phase* of human society—a phase to which christianity must accommodate itself—a phase, to the demands of which, our energies should be aroused. We are not to despond, because, at first, evil influences seem to preponderate. They are ever more on the alert, and our religious sensibilities are the slowest to be awakened to efficient action.

It indeed cannot have occurred that christianity has grown decrepid; that it cannot grapple with and surmount its new difficulties; that it must retire from business and excitement, lest its feeble flame be extinguished, and that it must therefore oppose all advancement of the physical and intellectual energies of a fallen world, lest it be found inadequate to its task of regenerating and ruling it!

No. It is not thus that we relinquish its claim to be "the power of God and the wisdom of God." Though, through the tardiness and ill-discipline of its earthly host, it may ever seem, for a while, to wane under the more rapidly developing powers of an unsanctified world, still it will rise and continue to rise, until, its present difficulties proving its eventual advantages, it meets with the fulfillment of prophecy, that "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it."

The application of these remarks is plain. Do we behold the family institution in danger of waning before the excitements of the age—its restraints in danger of being diminished—its hallowed influences in danger of being overwhelmed? Then there is the louder call upon the fidelity of all who can exert the least counteracting influence. And among all, and above all, let the pulpit be heard to speak forth from its eminence, and warn of the increasing dangers of household neglect. Let voice answer to voice from the watch-towers of Zion, as her watchmen foresee the danger. Let them “cry aloud and spare not,” wherever error prevails; being constant, patient and *wise* in their instructions. Let Bishops, and Elders, and Deacons be “ensamples unto the flock,” each ruling “well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.” And let all, to whom in any measure is given the oversight of the flock of God, see to it, that while they are engaging with zeal in the various departments of benevolent effort, which are of more recent origin, that they do not enforce with *diminished*, but with a proportionally *increased* earnestness the obligations of household duties. Labors, like virtues, are often to be valued according to their unobtrusiveness.

To look after families—to teach, and warn, and admonish from house to house, or for parents to sit amid the quiet of their own domestic circles, and labor, and teach, and pray, savors but little of ostentation. But these *nurseries are not to be neglected*. The good that the people of God secure to the cause of Christ by their more public and high sounding efforts, is secured at a ruinous cost, *if the religious culture of christian households is thereby in the least relaxed*.

If the following pages, which owe their origin to the views expressed above, shall be found, in the humblest degree, to contribute to the desired end, the author's wishes will be fully met. They were first prepared and delivered as discourses to the congregation under his pastoral charge, and are now, in their present form, DEDICATED TO THE MATERNAL ASSOCIATION in connection with his church and people. The existence of that association was the occasion of their delivery from the pulpit; and the interest manifested by its members, together with their personal efforts, have been one of the chief causes of their assuming this more permanent form.

If, in the limited sphere of the author's personal acquaintance and influence, they should prove acceptable and useful, all his ambition will be gratified, while all his reasonable expectations will be fully answered.

E. H.

Second Presbyterian Church, }
 Troy, N. Y., June, 1840. }

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

EVERY thing that God has made, he has made for his own glory. There is not a single soul or thing, law or relation, at present existing according to the first pure ordinance of heaven, but what has a religious adaptation. Every wonder and every law of physical nature is fitted to declare the glory of God to us, and to attract our meditations and our hearts upward to Him.

If, then, even things inanimate, and their various relations and dependencies, may be declared to be religious, in the sense of being adapted to the highest religious end—the glory of God; surely all the divinely instituted *social* relations are of an eminently religious character. For religion consists in the right and holy exercise of the social affections toward God, and toward one another. And whatever institutions, therefore, God has es-

established for the culture of the social feelings and relations of his intelligent creatures, must be pre-eminently religious. They have in view, more immediately than any thing else, the training of man for the love and worship of God, and, being themselves ordered and fashioned, in all their laws and relations, by Infinite Wisdom, they must constitute that earthly sphere, in which all the means of human sanctification are found resident and efficient.

Of these social institutions there are three, the character, modes and laws of which seem to be more directly ordained of God. There is, *first*, that great universal family which embraces all perfect and confirmed intelligencies above, over which Jehovah presides, as the ever-living and watchful Head, and in the midst of which is His peculiar glory and manifested presence. Here is the throne of His holiness and power, encircled, day and night, by the attendance and praises of His holy and His happy creatures.

It is on earth that we find the other two religious institutions or societies, holding a close relation and similitude to their great prototype, and being the ordained earthly instrumentalities whereby our ruined race may be raised to the great and the perfect family above. These two are the

Family and the Church. These institutions contain within themselves a sufficiency for the entire control and redemption of ruined man. They embrace all of government that can lay claim to direct divine authority, and are, in themselves, therefore, sufficient for all its purposes. The necessity of human governments arise not from the defect, but from the simple neglect of that which is divine. Such a necessity, it is readily conceded, exists, and such governments are recognised in scripture as holding a secondary authority over all men.

But, though we do not look for the time ever to come, when the principles of the divine government will be so fully developed and established on earth, as to supersede the existing necessity of those that are human; still we should seek to *approximate* that development, and God's people should learn more and more of the pre-eminent importance and efficiency of those institutions which have their origin in Infinite Wisdom, and are ordained by direct divine authority.

The views taken in the following pages are mainly based, not merely on a connection, but on an actual similitude between the Family and the Church on earth, and the great Family above. The former are the miniatures of the latter, and

as such are intended as introductory to its heavenly enjoyments. It is in the light of this similitude that the author attempts to exhibit the parental relation and responsibilities. He hopes that, by the blessing of God, it may make an unwonted impress upon some parents, concerning the high dignity and exalted duties of their station.

CHAPTER II.

THE FAMILY, A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION.

THAT the Church of Christ is a purely religious institution, is unquestionable. But that the family is as strictly and solely so, is not a conviction that is generally and definitely prevalent. It is regarded as exerting a high moral influence ; as being the proper nursery of the future man, and of the undying spirit : but it is far from being invested, in the popular mind, with that high and heaven-derived religious character which properly attaches to it. It is the object of this chapter to show, that the *Family is as strictly a religious institution as the Church*. Where the form of either exists without the indwelling spirit of piety, they are perverted and corrupt. The remark is equally applicable to both, for an irreligious family is as essentially an abhorrence in the sight of God, as a soulless and corrupt church.

THAT GOD HAS ESTABLISHED THE SOCIAL RELATION OF THE FAMILY CIRCLE, is a full justification of the foregoing remarks. When He had laid the foundations of the earth, and fixed the bounds of the sea, and set in sure and lasting order all material things, He established the law of marriage also to regulate man, whom He had made a social and moral being. It was thus that, in this institution, He laid the foundation of society, on which, the whole superstructure of morality and piety was to rest. Man was at that time, a holy being, and all the circumstances and relations that were then ordered concerning him, had reference to the holy end for which he was created. Therefore it is, that this family relation, being established by God for the right regulation and developement of holy man, is a purely religious institution.

Yea, and it has even a pre-eminence over the church, in the fact of its pre-existence. It was the first religious institution. It was, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, an earthly type, pure and symmetrical, of the heavenly world: it was an appropriate nursery of newly created beings, and was fully adapted to prepare them for that family, in which God is recognised, more directly, as the Father, and of which, in itself, it was the lovely miniature.

The Church ranks after it in order of time, because it ranks after it, in order of necessity. It was not until man, through the blinding influence of sin, lost sight of the great family above, that the church, with its rich provisions for man's fallen state, became necessary as a remedial institution. The church on earth is now a more extended type than the family, embodying, more palpably, to the darkened eye of man, the heavenly world, to which it is introductory. It is a new link inserted to reconnect the broken chain. Heaven being forgotten, the Church is the *New Jerusalem which has come down from heaven*, embosoming unnumbered blessings in the illustrations it affords to man of the glorious church above; in the instructions it furnishes; and in the regenerating and sanctifying grace it dispenses.

Thus it appears, not only that the Family is as truly a religious institution as the Church, but that, in fact of priority at least, it claims a pre-eminence. And it is *now*, what it ever has been, and ever will be in this world, the great corner stone of the whole social religious superstructure.*

* That the marriage relation was intended to be perpetual, is evident from the words employed by the sacred writer, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife." It had evident reference to the posterity of this first pair,

the *family*, the great corner stone. Take this away, and religion is gone—all moral restraints are broken up, and the bonds of society are but brittle clay. But though you overthrow the ministry and its altars, though you destroy the Sabbath as a general observance, though you have legislative enactments against all other religious institutions and observances, while yet the *family* remains, there may be *religion*; its fires may burn, and its incense arise from family altars, and God may yet keep his covenant with some of the children of men. But when this first and last religious institution is abolished, then it is that all is gone: the last star that shed its twinkling rays on society is extinguished. It is the morning and the evening star.

INFIDELITY BEARS ITS TESTIMONY THAT THE FAMILY IS A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION, and that it is one of eminent importance. This may be seen by a moment's observation of the course of infidelity concerning it.

It is truly said that the children of this world are wiser in their day and generation than the children of light. The people of God do not seem as well to understand the high importance of purifying these primary religious institutions, and main-

taining godliness there, as the devil evidently understands the importance to his cause, of vitiating and overthrowing them. Infidelity is opposed to the marriage institution. Its disciples treat its claims with wantonness, and oftentimes with fear and aroused opposition. They may not always themselves discern the precise relation which the Family holds to all religion, but the prince of the power of the air that *worketh in the children of disobedience* discerns it with a penetrating sagacity. And he urges on his disciples to lay the axe at this root of the tree of life, while the people of God seem to be but feebly sensible of the duty of rallying for its defence and maintenance.

Infidelity may labor with ponderous blows, and with fearful success to break down the ministry and overthrow the sanctuaries, and crumble down that great pillar of the more public religious institutions—the Sabbath; but its blows are most fearful when aimed at the family institution. The fires on the public altars will assuredly go out, if the fires on the private altars are extinguished, and the family sanctuary is overthrown.

It is not often that a systematic attack is made on the family institution: for it is of the wise ordering of Him who established it, and who knows its importance, that its *entrenchment amid human*

sympathies is so strong as to buy the courage, even of Satan. Yes: men will give up any thing quicker than the endeared sanctuaries of home, and wife, and children. We should learn, then, the high importance of this religious institution from the fact on the one hand, that our heavenly Father has *guarded it so firmly*; and from the fact, on the other, that Infidelity looks upon it with such deep malignity. It walks around, and we sometimes hear the voice of its roaring; but it dares not the onset, while as yet "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." But when God is provoked to leave a people, and their households, then the onset and the triumph of Infidelity may come.

So it was in wicked France. The roaring Lion stood, with the altars, and the priesthood, and the Sabbath, and the Bible under his feet; but yet there was jealousy in his heart, and anger in his eye, and an awfully suppressed restlessness in his mighty frame—for he looked at the family institution still remaining. He looked again—God had left it! He crouched—he sprang: and with one terrific roar—the loudest that the world ever heard, and that sent dismay through every Christian land—he announced the completion of his triumph!! A miserable female, hunted up from

amid the loathsome vileness of Paris, was set up in the centre of that enlightened city—was decked with garlands and was worshipped as the goddess of Licentiousness and Reason!

Behold how extremes meet! No sooner had the pride of human reason cast away the grace of God, and repudiated all religion; no sooner had it proclaimed its liberation as perfect, and attempted to soar upon its own wings, than it fell like Lucifer! And that day, the most refined city of a Christian country descended and shook hands with the Sandwich Islander, in his cruel and degrading rites of obscenity and blood! *Shook hands*, did I say? The poor Islander, I can rather conceive, would start back with horror and say, as, for once, he looked upon those lower than himself—“*I am holier than thou.*”

If, then, the Family is the first and the last hold of religion—if it is that which, above all other earthly institutions, God has surrounded with the strongest guards, and if it is that, at which *timid* infidelity *growls*, and *unbridled* infidelity *leaps*, we have abundant circumstantial evidence that it is a religious institution of the highest importance. And all doubt about the propriety of this appellation, in its strictest sense, vanishes, when we view these facts in connection

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with the previous considerations, viz., that it was solemnly constituted and appointed by God as a perpetual institution, and that he distinctly recognises its pre-eminent religious character, both in the dealings of his Providence, and in the covenant of his grace.

CHAPTER III.

THE FAMILY, A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION.

(CONTINUED.)

THE farther we contemplate the family, the more fully will be developed that view of its character which we have given in the former chapter. The evidence thus far adduced is of an external character. But the more deeply we descend into this sacred institution, and explore the principles and adaptations of its *constitution*, we bring to view a mass of internal evidence establishing, with irresistible power, the same impression. No one can contemplate the pure relations there subsisting, and their adaptation to the great purposes of our present and future being, and the principles on which alone its adaptations can be answered, without feeling that he is contemplating a structure, on every part of which should be written, "Holiness to the Lord."

It was something else than a matter of "sentiment" that led our Saviour to "Cana of Galilee," when there was a marriage there. The recognition of the family was among the earliest public acts of His ministry. He sealed that day's transaction with the glory of a miracle.

It is right to insist that the religious character of the family be more exhibited and enforced from the pulpit. Parents should be made to feel that they have responsibilities of a most solemn character resting on them. The christian community need instruction and quickening on this subject, and it is ample time that line upon line and precept upon precept be given.

The circumstances of irreligious parents may be forcibly and solemnly exhibited. They are placed at the head of a religious institution, but there they stand without piety. Their families were designed for religious ends. The little community is organized, and the parent is set at its head to rule it in the fear of God. But, alas! there is no spirituality there. The institution is perverted. The parent holds a place, as the highest officer in this religious society, while he is utterly devoid of the first great requisite for his station. Does the eye of such a parent peruse these pages? How often, let me ask, have you falsely consoled yourself that

you hold no place of religious obligation, like many professing christians, only to have your unworthiness appear? But you do hold a place of most solemn and important religious obligation. There is no earthly institution more strictly sacred, in its origin, in its design, and in its adaptations, than the family. And it is one of these institutions of which you have the charge. But you have no religion!

Perhaps you take the name of God in vain; or perhaps you are dishonest in your dealings; or, if not guilty of such sins, you live in the habitual disregard of all religious things. Now what would you think of an irreligious minister; of a dishonest, or of a swearing minister! But if you are addicted to all or to either of these habits, while you are at the head of a household, your own character is the like of such a minister; for he is but the high officer of one religious institution, while you are the head officer of another. He perverts and degrades his office; you pervert and degrade yours. And an angry and avenging God will cause a similar condemnation to overtake the sacrilege of each.

What would you think of a prayerless minister? But your character, while yet you are prayerless, is the like of his. A family without religion is as inconsistent, and as truly a distressing spectacle,

as an irreligious church. Ah, beloved reader, you may have often judged hard of inconsistent professors, and of faulty ministers, while you have falsely consoled yourself that you are not guilty of such sins. But look upon yourself in the religious office you hold, and which you are perverting, and then remember the words of the Apostle, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."

It is a sad thing for hearers to sit under a godless minister, or to be associated with a prayerless and graceless church. Such a minister will sink to an awful condemnation, and his people may mostly perish with him. But it is also an awful thing to be an irreligious parent; and the condemnation of such an one will be great. And it is a great calamity to be born a child into such a family; to come into existence in the midst of an institution designed as a religious one, but where there is no religion; to be educated in a family where the salt of divine grace should be mingled with the influences of tenderer years, but where there is no savour of piety.

I look upon a congregation that sit under the ministrations of an heretical and wicked minister,

and I say—poor people! So I look upon the children of a family, over which irreligious parents preside, and I say—poor dependent children; born in the pale of an institution that should protect you, but there is no piety there; there is no hedge of covenant favor about you! Where such a scene is contemplated, the following language of another seems just: “If there be one curse more bitter than another to man, it is to be the offspring of an irreligious home—of a home where the voice of praise and prayer ascends not to God, and where ties of human affection are not purified and elevated by the refining influence of religious feeling.”

Perhaps the full justice and force of the preceding remarks may fail of being appreciated. If so, it will result from overlooking the reason that led to the establishment of the family. It was established as a nursery for immortal spirits. Does not a mother love her child; and, if she is in the discreet exercise of her affections, will she not be watchful of the one to whom she may commit any portion of its training? And what can excite her feelings to a higher pitch, than the discovery of wanton, and deliberate, and persisted neglect of her own infant? And what do we think of a nurse that can receive it with professions of tenderness and affection, and then thus abuse it? But God is

the "Father of our spirits." He creates immortal beings, and he loves them too with a strength that maternal affection can but feebly typify. He has demonstrated this love by the whole scheme of redemption. Having such love to infant spirits, think you he will be careless in providing for them? Or think you he will withhold his righteous and awful displeasure from those who trifle with, or even neglect their interests? Behold the virtuous excitement and power of a frantic mother, as she looks upon the abuse that is threatening the destruction of her child: and, think you, will the anger of an heavenly and an Almighty Father be tolerable when he visits the blood of ruined souls upon the heads of ungodly parents? How awful those scripture intimations that God is hereafter to *require at our hands* those souls, of which, in any of the relations of life, he has constituted us the guardians!

Beloved reader, if you are a parent, remember that it is no equivocal indication of God's love to and care for your infants, that he has bound them to your love so closely. What, on earth, is stronger than parental affection! And should we not learn from this, that God will not commit them to our training without the strongest securities that earth knows—even the guarantees of *parental af-*

fection? If we love them, God loves them more. Our love is but a feeble scion of His. And if we visit with the extreme of punishment those who would injure the bodies of our children, what shall we not expect from God towards those who, not only by neglect, but by the positive influence of an irreligious example, educate their souls for eternal death!

Indeed it may well be asked if there is, on earth, a more pitiable, and, in prospect, a more dreadful condition than that of an irreligious parent.

The obligation of united and daily household prayer occurs to our view here too plainly to be passed in silence. What is a religious institution or society without prayer; whose members never unite in calling upon the name of the Lord? Why! it is as reasonable for us to assemble upon the Sabbath in the sanctuary, and talk of our worldly affairs; and make the sacred place a weekly resort for friendly, or business interviews; and banish the sacred desk, and the sound of prayer, and religious instruction—it is as reasonable so to do, as to live in a family where no prayer is heard; no religious instruction is given; no songs of praise ascend. Such a family presents us with the spectacle of a religious institution in ruins, as truly as would such a sanctuary. Both

are perverted from their religious designs. And while such a church as has been described, God will surely visit with judgments, we are not to wonder that it is written of such families, "*I will pour out my fury on the families that call not on my name.*" God will show in the end of his dealings with prayerless families that he has ever regarded them as perverted religious institutions. And the parents of such will find no fitter companions in their destruction than those who fall from the high places of the church. O the condemnation of unfaithful religious officers!

The great object of the family can never be answered while household prayer is totally neglected. Religion is not its secondary object. Its introduction there is not merely to impart a little healthful savour. Religion is the great design of the family—that to which all its arrangements, and all its influences should be adapted. Then godliness extends every where—then it permeates society—then it mingles with and controls every habit and feeling of man, and we begin to be like the angels of God.

What an outrage upon religion, then, is a family where there is no prayer—no religious instruction—no priest of the household to be found reading the oracles of God, and kneeling to guide the

devotions and the praise of the little circle! There seems to be a species of sacrilege attributable to that man who neglects the altar of his household.

The truth is that, such is the constitution of human society, we cannot escape the most solemn religious obligations. They are upon us: and unless we acquit ourselves with fidelity, they will testify against us.

There is one *object to be subserved by the church, the importance of which should be more deeply felt by all its officers and members.* That object is to watch over and cherish the family. It does not seem to us that all the high ends of the earthly church are answered when the ministry and ordinances are maintained, and a watchful care and christian discipline is exercised, over its individual members. The church and the family are intended to have, and do have a high reciprocal action upon each other. The order and the piety of the one indicates pretty clearly and definitely the order and piety of the other. And when we consider that the family is the oldest institution, and that its existence as an organized and visible body is the most essential to the maintenance of piety, being its last hold in any community, it cannot fail to appear that the church owes a peculiar duty to the families which repose in its bosom, and which look to it for counsel and defence.

The great object of the church of Christ, as a spiritual body, is to manifest the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. But considered as an organized body it may and does have lesser ends which are tributary to the greater. It is manifest that one of the most important of these tributary ends is to overlook families, as the primary institutions, of which, in fact, the visible church is but the *confederation*.

It is vain, then, for churches to expect permanent prosperity so long as they neglect this manifest duty—so long as they allow these primary religious institutions to languish—their altars to be deserted, and strict religious education to be neglected in these sanctuaries of the young. It is unavailing to alledge that the church cannot interfere with households. The duties of households are prescribed in the Word of God, and it is the object of the church, by kindly influences, to secure to the greatest possible extent, the faithful discharge of all commanded duties.

It is the duty of every christian parent to secure the most hallowed influences in his own household, and to hedge around his little ones with religious truth and ordinances. It is not enough that it is required of such a man to lead a personal life consistent with his profession. He covenants to live

and to labor for God in all the relations of society. In every lawful station he is but the Lord's servant, and he exposes himself to friendly christian remonstrance and dealing whenever he fails to do his utmost to advance the Redeemer's kingdom. If he neglects his duty to his household, which is alike a dictate of nature and of grace, it is the duty of the church—a duty which, with Christ and their brother, they have covenanted to perform—to look after him, to interpose the influence of their love and fidelity, and to excite him to the protection from Satan of the little ones whose parental guardianship he seems to have thoughtlessly abandoned. This duty is owed from the church to the brother whom they have covenanted to counsel and cherish; and the feeble cry of his tender infants, upon whom the seal of the church has been set, pleads with the brethren for fidelity. By baptism the children become connected with the church, and that connection should insure to them, for their own sakes, during their defenceless years, the interposition of the church, if there arises any danger that, through parental negligence, Satan may prey upon their souls. Who can doubt that if, upon such views, the church would faithfully and kindly act, in its supervision of families, it would remain no longer an ideal, but would become a

palpable advantage, which results from bringing infant children within the *pale of the church*?

The Church owes duties to the children of its members, in the discharge of which its officers should, from time to time, and in a spirit of love, enter every household, and enforce with kindness, but firmness, the duties of religion there. There is not a little babe, in the household of any of its members, but what stretches its helpless hands to the covenanting church. In it, the church should feel an interest; and to it, she should discharge her duties.

This obligation of fidelity on the part of the church, through its officers and members, to the families and the children of the covenant, is a matter of exceeding interest and importance. It can be partially discharged,

1. By requiring all parents to bring their children and have the seal of the covenant set upon them; that, in the administration of the ordinance, they may be reminded what the family is—what parental duties are—what covenant promises are given, and may be solemnly stimulated to the discharge of their high duties.

2. By requiring the establishment and maintenance of a family altar—that God may be acknowledged in the family, and that there may be, at

least, this partial answering of the end for which it was instituted.

These things we have a scriptural right to require, and I see not how those can be regarded as in regular standing with the church, who neglect them. And it is a subject which should be solemnly pondered, whether the churches of our own and every land should not awake to a more strict exercise, in these particulars, of fraternal oversight.

3. But still more may be done. Religious instruction should be given in the family. The form or seasons of this cannot be prescribed, neither can its neglect be well made a matter of church interference. But much may be done, from house to house, to inculcate this duty on parents, and to aid and encourage them in attention to it.

4. Unwearied diligence should be given to this oversight of families. It may require labor and patience of the officers of any church. And the labor is unostentatious. It does not thunder from the pulpit—it is not seen in multiplied meetings—it does not raise its head to attract the notice of men; but, like many other influences that are *unseen*, its results are the most powerful and beneficial. The labor is more like that of the pruning

knife, which promises but little, yet accomplishes much in the season of fruit.

And here an essay might be easily appended on the mis-direction of modern efforts. And, if inappropriate to this place, it surely would not be inappropriate to this age. The church has yet to learn that her highest interests are seriously suffering, not from the *want* of attention and labor, but from its *misapplication*. If labor was so bestowed as to be less *seen*, it would be more *felt*.

The author cannot close this chapter without adverting to one evil, which has an intimate connection with this subject. He refers to the practice, too prevalent among our purest churches, of multiplied religious services. They are not to be indiscriminately condemned. At special seasons, such a multiplication may be moderately demanded. But it is a question of serious moment, whether the growing system of recent years is not feeding on the life blood of the family institution. The solemnity and influence of the family altar may be overwhelmed by the more imposing and exciting services of the congregation, while opportunities of *family religious instruction* are almost entirely crowded out of the Sabbath, their appropriate day.

It may be said that the demand for religious in-

struction is increased. Then make *every house a sanctuary*. Erect an altar to the Lord under every roof. Let a portion of every Sabbath—by concert, if thought desirable—be devoted to family instruction. Surely then, if ever, the demand will be met. Home religion is that which saves the soul. It is less deceptive than the religion of the sanctuary. There may be found families, the parents and the children of which appear well abroad and are credible professors, but at whose home religion is scarcely mentioned. Perhaps such a family, if they made their dwelling more of a sanctuary, would not desire to go so much *abroad* to worship God. And we might be sure that their religion would never suffer for the change. And we venture to predict, that were public religious services, in many places, to be somewhat curtailed in number, that the families that have the most *home* religion would be the last to complain of any *personal* deprivation by the change.

But how can this be done, asks some reader, who is willing to allow the excellence of the *theory*. It is in point to reply, that it will never be effected by a system that assumes it to be an impossibility. It will never be effected by the too popular reasoning, "families will not do so, and, therefore, we must meet the exigency as well as we can, though our practices may be attended with some evil."

We err, when we assume that God's appointed means are impracticable. If the family is His institution, then it *can* be what it *ought* to be, and that is the only assumption, on which we are lawfully to act. The way of man's devising is, generally, to his eye the most promising, and to his feelings the most agreeable; while God's ways, though the most laborious and self-denying, and the least ostentatious, are the most faithful and efficient. Let us be careful, then, in prosecuting the Redeemer's cause, lest, by following some other channels than divine institutions, and appointed means, we be found working against the laws of nature and the laws of covenant grace.

We wisely labor, then, when we seek to convert every house into a sanctuary—to make every dwelling a *bethel*—to cause the voice of religious instruction to be heard in every family—to habituate the parents and the children to convene for religious counsel and prayer. In this channel, let our efforts be increasingly directed. And the most exalted condition of earthly society will be attained, when we can look upon every abode of man as the house of God—upon each family as a little church, in the bosom of which, immortals are reared, secure from the more destructive snares of a wicked world. Then, when we might look upon

a crowded city, or on the little village that reposes amid the solitude of the hills, or that is set like a jewel in the bosom of a verdant plain, we should behold the spires of the greater sanctuaries, rising amid innumerable lesser ones, around each and all of which, the favor of the Lord is constantly encamping.

Then, while the services of the sanctuary would be the head of the means for religious instruction, they would be viewed as the head and not as the body—as the more prominent means and not as the great *absorbing* instrumentality, whereby God is to make the “peace” of Zion to be “like a river,” and her “righteousness as the waves of the sea.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAMILY CONSTITUTION.

It lies at the foundation of all correct apprehension and discharge of parental responsibilities, that parents take the right view of the principles, on which the family is constituted, and the model, if any, after which it is fashioned. When this view is once clearly taken, the great end of the family, as a religious institution, will be more apparent, and the sphere assigned to each member of it will be more distinctly defined.

It surely harmonizes with the similes frequently used in the holy scriptures, and pre-eminently sanctioned by our Saviour, that HEAVEN* should be adduced as the MODEL OF A CHRISTIAN FAMILY. And we shall find that the more prominent relations, there subsisting between God and his creatures, have their counterparts in this miniature

* This word is here and subsequently used to signify that relation which subsists between God and his obedient creatures.

earthly institution. This being true, we are only to inspect the principles, on which the order and happiness of heaven are based, that we may discover those which should be the rule of our earthly households. And the parent is to look at the great principles which control the conduct of God to his creatures, as those, the like of which, are to direct him, in the administration of his lesser and deputed dominion.

God styles himself our Father. We are prone to regard this relation as rather nominal—as a title that he has *borrowed* from the endearing relations of this life. But we should rather regard him as the one, to whom the title originally belongs. God *is* our Father, and he is our only *real* Father. Are we the offspring of an earthly father?—are we guarded by the love of an earthly parent?—and is our infant dependence upon him? These things are true only in a secondary sense. But, of our Heavenly Father, it may be said, in a higher and truer sense, than it ever can be of mortals, that we are the offspring of His power—the protégées of His love, and that we are dependent upon Him for our daily existence, and our daily blessings. So that all the natural, lawful relations which subsist between earthly parents and their children, subsist, on ampler and un-

changing grounds, between those very children, and their Heavenly Father. As the great prime Author of our existence, God is our Father—as the One whose care of us and compassion toward us is of old and unchangeable, he is our Father—as the One unto whom we are allied by an intimate and eternal dependence, he is our Father.

In the relation, then, of God to us, we have the first, great idea of a Parent—not that idea of the relation first acquired by us, but its original model.

Is it not, therefore, the reverse of the truth to suppose that God, after he had instituted the relations of this life, and beheld the endearments of the family circle, borrowed from it the title of Heavenly Father, and assumed it as a symbol of his compassion? Does he not wear the title as originally his, and has he not modelled the parental relation after his own relation to his creatures; * so that parents, at the head of their households, borrow the title of Father from God, and are not only fashioned after his image, as to the natures they

* If this little book should chance to fall under the eye of a critical reader, the author would refer him to the comments of an able writer in the *Biblical Repository*, Vol. XII., p. 366-7, on *Genesis* 1. 26, 27. The comments referred to surely seem to teach that in the words "Let us make man in our image," &c., a reference may be had to man's being modelled not only in his individual character, after the nature, but, in his social condition, after the relations of heaven.

possess, but also as to the sphere in which they move, and the duties which devolve upon them?

We discover, then, this leading principle of the family constitution, that the father is deputed of God to hold that relation to his household—more especially to his children—which is a miniature of the relation subsisting between Jehovah and his creatures. As God is the creator of all, so he has made the father, in a secondary sense, the author of his children's being; and thus he becomes their nominal, while God is their real Father.

Is God a creator of infinite benevolence, who delights in watching over, and securing the interests of every creature he has made? See how, in the strength of parental affection, he has made a deep impress of this, his image, on the father's spirit. All his love and unwearied diligence for his little ones are the manifestations of this image; and they are, therefore, rightfully, and with a transcendent sweetness, appealed to by our Saviour, and the New Testament writers, as but the feeble illustrations of our heavenly Father's love. "If ye then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how *much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

And to complete the parental image, God has given the father authority over his household. Both by the laws of God and man, this authority is confirmed; and, within certain wholesome limitations, it is absolute; and there is implanted in the hearts of his little children, a sense of its rightfulness and propriety. And thus it is that the father is deputed of God to hold a relation to his household analagous to that which the great Father holds to the great family of man.*

Look, then, and see how completely, and with what infinite wisdom, God has constituted the family. It is a small circle. But it is a complete and a perfect nursery for a future and a happy existence. Here, in the apparent father, is the representative of the real Father in heaven, and the children look upon him as the author of their existence—as the one, bone of whose bone, and flesh of whose flesh, they are made. From this apparent father, they receive protection—they receive their daily bread—their shelter from the storm—their attention in sickness—their counsel in health—their sympathy in troubles, while

* By the term *Father* is signified the united parents. They are supposed to be one in counsel and one in action. The words *Father* and *Parents*, are therefore frequently used synonymously throughout these pages.

all these gifts are only *through* this father, and *from* God. Still so God dispenses them. And why? Why! that all the embryo relations of future and growing existence may be compressed into a circle fitted to the infant powers of the new-born intellect, and to the forming habits of the new-created spirit!

The little child is born, but he cannot understand who gave him being, who causes the ravishing sensations of a healthful physical existence, to rush in upon his wondering and his gazing spirit. But soon it knows its mother, and learns to leap with joy at the sound of its father's footsteps. They become the first, rightful objects of his affections and his confidence. He regards them as possessing all things, and his infant eyes wait upon them for the supply of every need. And thus the child exercises towards them those feelings which, for a season, are right; but which, as its infant powers expand, should be hereafter transferred to God. They stand as the representatives of God to the child; being constituted the stewards of its affections, its habits, and its energies. They receive from it love, obedience, devotedness; not as the matters of their proprietorship, but as tributes which, like faithful stewards, they are to transfer to God; that they may enter

heaven, saying, "Behold I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me."

The constitution, then, of the earthly family being so precisely similar to that of which God is the Father, it is both reasonable and scriptural to suppose, that there must be an equally striking harmony between the ends they contemplate, and the principles, or rules, on which their government is to be administered. And thus the lesser family appears to be, in the relations and dispositions it should cherish, an embryo of the greater: the traits that should and may be there cultivated, are the very traits which will fit us to be the affectionate and dutiful children of God.

How sweetly and fully has God provided for the security of every portion of our existence! The family is the constituted sanctuary of our infancy and childhood; and when we begin to ripen in understanding, the church stands, with its open arms, to acknowledge, guard, and cherish us; and when death removes, it but translates us to the sinless and eternal church, whose foundation is immovable, whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise. God is the ruler in heaven; Christ is the head of the church, and the father is the head of the family. And while there is a close relation, and intimate correspondence be-

tween the institutions, their designs and their laws, there is also a like relation and correspondence between their presiding officers. In short, the institutions are the same, under different phases. So that we have the church in the *family**—the church in the *world*, and the church *redeemed*! What a perfect and harmonious gradation! How sweetly and tenderly has God adapted the relations of this life to fit us, by a right training and developement, for the relations of the life to come!

We have thus considered the earthly father, in his allotted sphere, as a striking type of the God and Father of us all. It will be found that the Scriptures even apply the *name* of "*gods*" to men in certain official stations; the same word being used, in the original, to designate these human officers as is used to designate the only living and

* Our Baptist brethren do not perceive the church in the *family*. On their scheme, therefore, there is no distinct department, or phase of the *church*, for the guardianship of the earlier portion of our existence. It is only when our children "believe," that God enters into covenant favor with them, and their *infancy is unprovided for in the special economy of grace*. We can truly say it is our happiness and, we think, our scriptural privilege to believe otherwise. While we differ from them, we would differ in love, and wish them the happiness of a like mind with ourselves.

It will be remembered, as a previous declaration, that where there is no piety in the family, the *form* of the family-church is all that remains. But where there is piety, there is the family-church, and there, and there *only*, is there a significance in the family-ordinance.

true God. A full illustration of this is furnished in the language held in the 82d Psalm:

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty;
 He judgeth among the gods.
 How long will ye judge unjustly,
 And accept the persons of the wicked? Selah!
 Defend the poor and fatherless:
 Do justice to the afflicted and needy.
 Deliver the poor and needy:
 Rid them out of the hand of the wicked.

They know not, neither will they understand;
 They walk on in darkness:
 All the foundations of the earth are out of course.
 I have said, Ye are gods;
 And all of you are children of the Most High.
 But ye shall die like men,
 And fall like one of the princes.

Arise, O God! judge the earth:
 For thou shalt inherit all nations.

In this Psalm, the princes of Israel are evidently addressed. In verse 7th, the expression, "ye shall fall like one of the princes," distinguishes between them and the princes of Gentile nations.

It will be seen that, in the first and sixth verses, they are addressed as "gods." The object of the whole psalm is to admonish them of their official duties; and its pertinence consists in the relation and official likeness which is assumed as existing between them and Him who is *God over all*.

They are reminded of the presence of the all-seeing God in the midst of their assemblies; that to him they are accountable; that their administration is lawful only as it is in accordance with His will; that while the "gods" judge others, He it is that "judgeth among the gods."

The inspired writer then remonstrates against their injustice, and expostulates with them concerning their base perversions of their authority. He admonishes them, in the midst of their dignity, to remember that it is not *theirs*; that it is delegated for a little while; that though he calls them "gods," they shall "die like men," and fall like the princes of other nations. And he then rejoices in prospect of the time when the great King and God, in the person and office of the Messiah, displacing all these unfaithful servants, shall arise and assume the government of the earth himself.

The infinite distance, both as to nature and office, between these lesser ones and the great Jehovah, is abundantly indicated by such like passages as the following, "For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods."

We have thus appealed to the scriptures for our full defence, lest some should deem us guilty of impiety, while we speak (reverently) of men, in

many of the relations of this life, as bearing, *officially*, the image of God. An abundance of similar scripture language might be additionally ad-duced. But it is sufficient to ascertain, as has been already done, that mortals who "die like men" may, with reverence and propriety, be spoken of, in some stations, as representatives, or types, to their fellow men, of God.*

But may we not, from the use of this scripture language, learn something of the divine constitution of human society? God controls it by the establishment of numerous subordinate dependencies. "There is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth *the ordinance of God.*" The ruler, if he answers the end for which he was constituted such, is, to the upright, "the minister of God for good" and "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." In these, and the accompanying words of the Apos-

* Bp. Horne, in his commentary on this Psalm, says, "It is true, then, that magistrates are exalted above other men; that they are dignified with a commission from above; appointed to be the vicegerents of heaven upon earth; and therefore called by the name of him in whose name they act."

Those who have access to the Biblical Repository, Vol. XII., will find on p. 356, the commencement of an interesting article, entitled "Scriptural idea of angels," which treats of the application of the title "gods" to created beings.

tle, the ruler is represented as one appointed to "minister" and "execute" God's will. If he rules *well*, he subserves the end for which he was exalted; if ill, let him remember the portentous words of the Psalmist, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods."

Speaking, then, of society, existing in a state accordant with God's righteous will, we cannot but perceive the appropriate sense in which those holding stations of eminence and authority, are called "gods." As we behold Kings, and Princes, and Rulers of any description, we see that whatever power they have, is of God; whatever station they hold, is that which God provided, and that to which he fitted and appointed them; whatever wisdom they have, is of God; and whatever authority they possess is that which God establishes. So that they have imparted to them, each in their own sphere, some of the official attributes of Jehovah; for power and authority, and dignity, and wisdom—in fine, all that constitutes fitness for dominion belongs unto God alone. The creature can hold neither except as God chooses to exalt him, and fill the creature-emptiness from His own infinite fullness.

Thus, is God a King? So may men be kings in lesser spheres; kings by the appointment and

investiture of God ; responsible to him, from whom they derive their authority. Their station is modeled after His, and their fitness for it is of His fullness.

Is he God, to be obeyed, and to be had in reverence? So may men, in lesser spheres, be "gods" to be obeyed and revered. But while holding such stations, they pervert them entirely whenever they forget Him who appointed them; or are unmindful of the humility which should clothe them; or their responsibility to the Supreme Dominion; or whenever they fail to render their administration tributary to the government of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. And their character, also, should, in conformity with their station, be modeled after the character of Him whom they officially represent. They should bear his moral image.

But, of all the stations in which men hold an eminence over their fellows, there is none more evidently of divine appointment, none more unchanging in its nature, and perpetual in its sanction, than that of the Father, or of the united parents at the head of their household. Here, dominion is less restricted, and consequently more absolute than any where else. And if, in any of the relations of life, it is lawful to contemplate man

as an intended type of God, surely the father of a family is, to his own household, a type of the Father of all. And, on the same principle (only with a stronger propriety,) that princes and rulers of nations are called "gods," may the father be styled the god of his household; for there he is made such by the investiture of supreme authority; by being the model, to the eyes of his little ones, of perfection. They know no one above him; they love no one before him.

It is the most important of the social relations, because it lies nearer the foundation of human society. It is the only relation of which *mention* is made in the fifth commandment, which is rightly interpreted by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, to inculcate the principle of obedience and reverence towards all the "powers that be." It is, as recognised in that commandment, the perpetual relation—it contains the germ of all government; "honor" is there inculcated as the root of all subsequent obedience to God or man.

Nations may perish, and the crowns of kings may fall: kingdoms may be dissolved, and be recombined. But the family relation is unchanging where there is aught of the light or influence of Christianity. These foundations of society stand fast, and the influence that is prevalent here, is

that which kings and nations cannot alter. So potent is it, when in any good degree uniform, that to its supremacy, every human government must be accommodated, and monarchs, even, must pay a deference.

At the head of this institution, stands the father, the governor of his little household, invested with power, dignity and importance, possessed in no other earthly station. He is the first type of supreme excellence and authority which his children see. He is, in point of order, the first of that *series of types* which the constitution of human society presents: and which, in the persons of princes and rulers, and pre-eminently in Christ, the all-glorious head of the church, stand out as brighter, and still brighter beacons, safely to conduct the spirit in all its pathway, from the cradle to the grave; from infancy to heaven!

Alas, how have we fallen! Who possesses this image of God! We may accommodate the lamentation of the weeping prophet, "How is the gold become dim; how is the most fine gold changed! * * * * The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" Yea: and, as we pass from contemplating the destruction of the rightful parental

image, to the beholding of that *parental neglect*, which is so cruel and so universal, we may resume the strain of the prophet ; “ Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones : the daughter of my people is become cruel like the ostriches in the wilderness.* The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst ; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them.” And were it not for the glorious light of the Sun of Righteousness that the grace of God has bidden to arise, and that shines through the cross, and the word, and the church ; our lamentations might be bitter indeed. But its rays have power to restore the lost image, and relume parents, and princes, and rulers with some good measure of heavenly light, that they may yet show forth the glory of God and conduct dependent spirits to the future realms of eternal joy.

It must be obvious, in this view of the constitution of the family, that the station of parents is invested with solemn responsibilities. They are the first objects of supreme affection. Their own character will, with almost unvarying certainty, make its corresponding impress on their children.

* The ostrich has no natural affection. It lays its egg, buries it in the sand, and abandons it to be hatched by the heat of the sun.

And, if they stand as intended types of God, how important that they bear his image—that they harmonize with his government, and that they seek to live, and to rule, in the fear of the Lord.

And no less obvious is the criminality of filial disobedience. It is the germ of all unrighteousness—the first budding of sin.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHIEF MATTER OF PARENTAL SOLICITUDE.

THE parental relation being such as has been exhibited, there must arise, in the minds of pious and reflecting parents, many questions of exceeding interest. Indeed a serious contemplation of their households, as strictly religious institutions, and of themselves, as intended types of God—as having received their commission from Him, and as rightfully governing only for Him—cannot but arouse, to the most diligent inquiry and action, the soul of every parent who has aught of spiritual discernment, or spiritual sensibility.

The first question occurring is, *what is to be the great end of parental solicitude and effort*—what, the great matter that should press parental hearts, as they first look upon the breathing miniatures of themselves? Allow me, in thought, to stand

beside you, during the first calm moment in which you are permitted to look upon your new-born infant. We see it sweetly sleeping; nobler in its nature than the young of any other earthly race, and still the most dependent! The birds soon stretch their wings and procure their own subsistence; the lambs in a few hours, commence their gambols; but the infant, how helpless!

And why is it, that the nobler being is the most dependent, but that its education is the most important; and that this dependence may bind, and endearingly commend it to those whom God has constituted its earthly guardians?

But for what are you to educate this child? Will you selfishly receive it, as a mere object on which you may lavish your fondness? Will you forget, at this interesting moment, that this feeble infant *can never die*; and that the formation-period of its eternal existence is *thrown under your control*? Will you be so intent upon your pleasure in *loving*, as to forget your duty in *educating* it? This little breathing infant is speedily to be a seraph, or a ruined spirit. Hear, then, the wise man, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it;" and the apostle, also, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

And does not your heart respond, Amen? For what other end would you train it? Look around you, christian parent and answer.

Would you make bodily health the first object of search for your child? That way may be hedged up. Perhaps the seeds of disease were born with it; or some casualty may befall it to maim it for life, and entail upon it crippled energies, and circumscribed enjoyment. You may be foiled in every effort.

Would you seek for it distinction in this world? That is of dubious attainment. The promise afforded by its natural talents may not be so great in the eyes of others as in yours; and then Fame is very capricious in the bestowal of her favors. Many similar aspirants will be found, who will seek to blast your hopes, that they may secure the gratification of their own. There may be insurmountable obstacles in this path.

But there is one way which is unobstructed; one path which is open to all—the pathway to the grave—to that mighty sepulchre which entombs all human greatness, and levels all human distinctions. Earth bears her sons, for a little season, upon her surface, and permits them to sport in the light of heaven, and create their temporary distinctions, and revel in a world of illusive thought; and then

gathers them all again to her mother-bosom, where the dust of the lofty and the lowly mingle, in silent fellowship. There the cripple, and the man of perfect stature—the sickly, and the strong—the honored, and the despised—the rich, and the poor—the noble, and the vulgar are alike! They all bow down, and pass under the iron rod of death—they lie in the grave, and are commuted to kindred dust! There, in this vast dwelling place, is no more greatness, no more contempt—no more wealth, no more poverty—no more sickness, no more health. Like the deeper and lighter colors of the rainbow, when the sun-light falls upon the cloud, so are all these varieties of human condition, while the animated dust stands up and moves in the light of heaven. When men return whence they came, and fall back to the cells of the earth, which the light of the Sun never illumines, then, the colors of human condition are lost in the darkness of death.

It is in this way, and to this end of all temporal things that your child must go; for so far the path of existence is common. At this point, two paths diverge. While the body crumbles into dust, the spirit ventures on. It descends to a deeper, an eternal, a living death; or it ascends to live forever with its Heavenly Fa-

ther—to be welcomed to a world of glory, and to be received, as a loved child, into the family of the redeemed.

While, then, the way of health, and honor, and munificent possessions, and every other earthly way is uncertain, there is one, christian parent, which is both desirable and practicable—a way which, though Satan once closed it, a stronger than Satan has opened—opened wide—opened free—opened for yourself and your household. Have you not heard the voice of wisdom, saying, as she has stood and pointed to the path of virtue and of heaven, This is the way, walk ye in it? For what else has your family been thus constituted, and have you been placed at its head to hold the child's affections, and sway over it an unbounded influence, but that you may guide it home to God? And can you hesitate, as to the end for which to educate your little one? Can your thoughts ever go forward into its future history, without earnest and ruling desires that it be found in the ways of godliness? Can you allow any anxiety to transcend this, *that it be a child of God and an heir of heaven?*

Alas! there is much care for the body, but how little parental anxiety for the soul! There may be much doting affection; there may be many

hours of weary toil and solicitude for the temporal comfort of children ; and still there may exist most appalling neglect. The soul may be left to perish ! We are smitten with horror when we hear of the mother who has cast her infant children into the Ganges, or buried them, while yet living, beneath the cold earth. But may not eternity develop greater enormities enacted in christian lands ?

Imagine the heathen mother, after she has taken thus the lives of all her infant offspring, to have heard of Christ—to have believed on him—to have wept over her cruelty and sin, and finally to have gone to be with Jesus. Her weepings are ended. The children, whose untimely and cruel death at her own hands she had been lamenting, she now meets, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and greeting her advent with seraph voices. *Her* cruelty was to the *body* ; God over-ruled it for eternal good.*

Next comes the parent, from the bosom of a christian community—a parent who, though a personal believer, has neglected parental oversight

* On the subject of infants, the Scriptures are very silent. The assumption on which this paragraph is based, is not, as far as the author knows, explicitly sanctioned by them ; though there is much which invests it with a high degree of probability. It is blessed to know that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

and prayer. He looks among the happy throng for the son or daughter who, in the full vigor and maturity of life, found an unexpected grave. But there is no child to greet him. And then, were it not strangely impossible that heavenly happiness should be alloyed, we might suppose the painful recollection of his own neglect to fill him with anguish. *His* cruelty was to the *soul*. We shall judge of crime, hereafter, differently from what we judge of it here.

Does a parent read this, who has never made the salvation of his children the first, great object of anxiety and effort? Have you never yet bowed the knee in fervent, agonizing prayer for the eternal welfare of your child, or children? Unnatural parent! how can you look upon your beloved offspring, whose moral training and future destinies, God has committed to your keeping, and for whom you never pray? Does not the very beholding of them reprove your neglect, and the injustice you are doing them? How can it, rightfully, be otherwise than your morning, and evening, and even your night-watching prayer concerning them, that they be found at last among the ransomed of the Lord? We may quickly pass over all other petitions for our children's health, their temporal comfort, their life, that we may pour

out our souls, from the first dawning of their existence, until we can no longer pray, that they be saved from sin and from hell—that they be received into the presence of God to dwell with Him forever. Our desire should be, *Lord, grant us this petition, we will leave the rest with thee.*

Mother, Father,—look upon your little child, (as parents are often called to do,) look upon it seized with violent sickness, and, in a moment, poisoning between time and eternity; its spirit, perhaps, in a few hours, to pass beyond the influence of prayer. And can you not then pray? So, ever feel—so, ever pray; for at any moment it may be taken, though the bloom of health is upon its cheek, and the activity of youth is in its limbs.

Your little child—how dependent! how fondly it clings to your bosom! You will rise up, with a giant's strength, to defend it from a foe that seeks its life; and will you not strive, with an angel's strength, for the life of its soul!

An anecdote, in substance as follows, illustrating the awfulness of parental neglect, lately appeared in one of our religious periodicals.* There was once in London a loving family, the parents of which were professing christians. They were

* *New-York Observer* for 1839.

expecting, and anxiously awaiting the arrival, by water, of a cherished son. The vessel that bore him was wrecked, and the son perished. A surviving mate carried them the intelligence. They beset him, with parental tenderness, to know all the particulars ; especially inquiring what he thought of eternity, and what were his last words. You may conceive with what interest they listened for the reply, and held back their sobs and tears that they might hear. The faithful mate replied, that during five hours of suspense, before he was dashed upon the rocks, all he exclaimed was, "O cruel parents, you have brought me up for the present life, but said nothing to me about eternity."

Who can stay the reflection, that perhaps it is well for many professing christian parents, that the reproaches that are uttered in Hell, are not heard on earth !

As there can be but one sentiment concerning the way in which children should be trained ; so there should be but one effort—one aim. It should be that, to which every household arrangement and influence is made tributary ; viz, to commend God to our children, and our children to God. Let this be, through every changing circumstance and season, from first to last, the great, the daily, the hourly aim of every parent. Then, in that

household, God is honored ; around it, His favor encamps ; the end of the family is answered ; and parents and children are distinguished by the spiritual blessings of God.

It is only when this end, in the training of children, is sought, that the family—the lesser religious institution—is made to harmonize with the church, and with heaven. God created us for His own glory ; and none of the institutions which he has established, are rightly administered, by those to whom he has intrusted their care, except, as this ultimate end is kept in view, and faithfully subserved, by every lesser arrangement. If heaven is the model of a christian family, then the great end that God proposes *there*, should be the great end which the parent proposes *here*.

CHAPTER VI.

HABITS OF CHILDHOOD.

HAVING thus exhibited the great design and adaptation of the family institution, and the great end which the parent is constantly and prayerfully to propose, it comes next in order, to inquire into the HABITS OF CHILDHOOD which should be cultivated within this hallowed sphere.

And here, it is easy to indulge in an endless detail ; to enumerate the many feelings which children should be taught to cherish ; the many instrumentalities which should be used in their right training ; and the many errors that should be avoided. But, passing by these things, it is proposed, rather, to fasten the attention of the reader upon one or two characteristics, of leading importance.

The first great habit which should be implanted in our fallen nature is OBEDIENCE. From being.

by nature, rebellious, we must become obedient. From loving our own ways, we must turn to prefer God's ways, and to be subservient to His great and important ends. God is the great Controller of all things,—our Creator—the One who orders all things, superintends all things, and allots us a portion of His own work to accomplish—a portion, for which, and for which alone, He created us. Our wisdom is finite and dependent, and should be controlled by that which is infinite and creative; and our energies are all adapted to subserve the end, for which He fashioned them. God never made man to stand in any other relation to Himself, than that of entire subservience and dependence.

He is born dependent, and, child-like, leans upon the wisdom of his parents, and is safe only as he heeds their counsels. There is no more striking picture of dependence, than that which is presented in a new-born infant, as it lies helpless on its mother's bosom. It is this constitutional, inwrought dependence, that man can never outgrow. For when the infant grows to manhood, submission is still required "to the powers that be." *Men* must be governed as well as children; they must submit to the established rulers, in whom, superior wisdom is supposed to exist. Thus, all along, are we taught, in infancy, and in manhood, that there is

that above us, to which we must yield obedience. We can never surmount this truth. The strongest man—the highest angel, is as dependent as the infant of an hour. I do not mean merely that his dependence is as real, but that it is as entire; that in, and of, and by himself, he has no more power, no more wisdom. As the infant is dependent upon its parents, so are we upon God. And it were no less palpable and monstrous folly for the nursing child, were it endowed with the ability, to extinguish the instinct which directs it to its mother, than it is for us to refuse obedience to the great and upholding Creator.

If creatures are thus dependent, they must be obedient; for obedience is the first obligation of dependence. And here is the difference between sin and holiness; the one is conformity to the will of God—Obedience; and the other is non-conformity to, or neglect of His will—Disobedience; the one insures happiness, and the other insures misery. These two dispositions make, in short, the difference between heaven and hell. In heaven, God is sought, and God is obeyed; in hell, God is avoided, and God is repudiated: in heaven, the creature leans upon the Creator; in hell, the creature has divorced itself, measurably, from

God, and has become wedded to helplessness and misery.

The pious parent can have no hesitation in exercising a preference, unspeakably strong, that his children be accepted of God, and received into the number of the saints and angels; neither can he fail to see the surpassing importance of cultivating, in them, habits of constant subservience and obedience. Every act of this life, every habit here formed, tends to confirm us in obedience, or disobedience—to ripen us for heaven, or hell.

A disposition to obedience leads to an inquiry into the will of him whom we would obey. The obedient child will watch and anticipate, if possible, the wishes of its parent. So he who obeys God, will delight to study the law of God that searches the heart, and lays its broad, and universal claim upon the inner and outer man; and, searching, he will obey. So that you see, at once, that where the disposition of obedience is incorporated into the character, and God is set before the mind, as the great and rightful law-giver, the foundation of a godly character is laid deep and broad. "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

But there is one other characteristic that should be developed, side by side with this, in the unfold-

ing dispositions of the child—**LOVE**. By this is comprehensively signified all those cheerful emotions of the heart which accompany the outward act, and which give the only acceptable savour to human conduct. All true reverence, and regard for authority, have their basis here.

To the minds of some it may seem that the representations made above, of the duty of creature obedience, savour too much of austerity. But it is not maintained that we are created to yield a servile obedience. Servitude is a term, and an idea, that sin has introduced. It is the hand-maid of Disobedience; and was never known in Eden, or in Heaven. The Gospel seeks to dispel the unwelcome thing, and proclaim its own glorious "liberty." In seeking to reinstate us into a likeness to things heavenly, it promises to deliver us from "the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Angels do not bow as menials, and crouch under the rod of authority—they are not "eye-servants as men-pleasers," but they serve God with the heart. It has been well said,

**"But God abhors the sacrifice,
Where not the heart is found."**

A servile obedience is not that which satisfies God, or answers the end for which He created us.

He gave us affections—He styles himself our Father, and He would have our love. Hence the first commandment is given, claiming for God the first place in our affections; whereby we understand that every offering made to Him, in order to be acceptable, must be the cheerful offering of love. “Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

Without the savour of love diffused through the soul, no man has the disposition of heaven, nor can enter there, though his obedience be after the strictest sect of the Pharisees. Though he pray at the corners of the streets, morning, noon and night; though he sell all that he has and gives to the poor, yet, without charity, he is “as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” He obeys not, in that first particular which alone can render all subsequent obedience pleasing—namely, in giving his heart. Alas! there is much constrained obedience—much heartless and conventional morality, on which men may count, but God will reject. The obedience He requires, is the obedience of love—the obedience that the tender wife owes to her husband—that the church owes to Christ, who has commended his love to us in that he died for us.

In the christian character, then, as in the angelic, we are to find love and obedience, in unchanging alliance. David exclaimed, "Oh how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day;" "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes." While the command of Moses is, "Love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart, and all your soul," the same union of love with obedience is recognised in the declaration, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Paul said of all his signal obedience, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father." So that while fear of the penalty is the only motive operative on the mind of the disobedient, it is the love of the law and Lawgiver that elicits genuine and acceptable obedience. Therefore it is that we represent the obedience of love, comprehending, in itself, all things else, as the disposition of heaven, and as the great feature which we should seek to develope in our characters, and the characters of our children. Then they are brought up in the way wherein they should go, and in the indulgence of those dispositions which will ripen them, with daily rapidity, for the com-

panionship of angels; and for the obedience of heaven.

We may, in fact, consider the *obedience of love* as a single and peculiar characteristic, rather than as two distinct ones combined. For really there is no other obedience than that of love; for genuine obedience implies love. That man is not a good citizen who obeys the laws from any other motive than his regard for them. The criminal is awed by the prison. And—to apply these principles to family training—it is evident that the child has a poor title to an obedient disposition, who yields only under stern authority, and with sullen looks. Obedience must be cheerful, in order to be complete.

If this principle of affectionate obedience be but firmly established in the child, there is but one thing seemingly wanting, as far as parental instrumentality is concerned, viz., that the parent's laws and character be holy and equitable. Then the family will afford a striking resemblance to that heavenly dominion which is its glorious prototype; the principles of heaven will be re-established upon earth, and our little ones will advance into life under their strong protection, and their maturing influence. To establish these principles, and to cultivate, and confirm these habits of

childhood, should be the aim of every parent who would seek the spiritual welfare of his children, and who would diligently avoid all causes of future reproach.

True, this is but the beginning of education. As such, however, it is of the highest importance; for the foundation must be wisely and firmly laid, if we would entertain any reasonable assurance of the excellence and stability of the superstructure. Let these habits of childhood fail to be ingrafted upon the growing spirit, and a neglect occurs, which can be but poorly repaired in after life—a dominion is given to corruption, with which, the grace of God, if hereafter imparted, will have its severest struggle.

CHAPTER VII.

PARENTAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

IN the previous chapters we have endeavored to exhibit the character, constitution, and design of the family; together with the more prominent general principles which are adapted to its rightful control. The way seems thus opened, more directly, to consider parental duties and responsibilities.

PARENTS SHOULD BE MINDFUL OF THE OBJECT FOR WHICH THEY ARE DEPUTED TO HOLD THEIR PECULIAR RELATION. This, though a matter of but little thought, should be a subject of daily pondering and prayer. Why has the parent authority, but that he may require obedience? Why has he such power over the affections of his child, but that those affections be rightly trained?

But, parent, you have not this authority and control over your household, that you may exer-

cise your own capricious will. That will is finite, and is ever to act in subservience to that which is infinite. You are appointed to your station, that you may rule for God, and administer his laws—not your own. Your power over these infant spirits is not yours, that you may seek the advancement of your own interests; for God has created and ordered all things for himself. Neither is it the object of your deputed relation, that you should use the power which God has given you over the affections of your children, to concentrate those affections, exclusively, or chiefly, on yourself. While the temptation may be strong to yield yourself, solely, to the personal delights of these tender, social relations, remember the command which you are, first of all, to enforce on the growing understanding of your child, is, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me;” and the Spirit whispers to those who are yet in the filial relation, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”

God is glorified in having obedience, in its highest sense, rendered unto him alone; and he has not placed you in your family, that, by making your own will its law, you may share his glory, of which, he has solemnly declared, “My glory I will not give to another.” And, O man, who

art thou, that wouldst stand between an immortal soul and its God—that wouldst seek, when its affections should be shooting upward, to intercept them, by the interposition of yourself? Or, who art thou that wouldst shut, and barricade the laws of God from thy household, and govern it according to the caprice of a corrupt and changeable will! Who art thou that wouldst render the physical, and mental, and moral energies of thine household, tributary only to thine own ends—to the increase of thy fame, or thy wealth, or the care and comfort of thy declining years?

How many parents are guilty of these things! How many receive, and seek, by all the arts of parental fondness, to *fasten* the affections of children to themselves, and stay them there! How many? The answer is plain: as many as never speak to their children of God—as many as neglect to direct their affections to the Eternal Father. And how many seem to think that the energies of their children are to be spent for the common benefit of this earthly family! As many as forget to teach their children that they are the LORD'S—that the first, great object of existence is to serve Him with diligence and fidelity. The farmer is guilty of this who sends forth his children to the toil and the labor of the field, that his barns

and store-houses may be filled, while he neglects daily to teach them that they are to live only for God. The merchant is guilty of this, who imparts to his children, by his chief and perhaps only endeavours, the training of the counting house, that he may station one here and another there, that they may aid him in his fond pursuit of wealth. Such parents take the affections and energies to themselves which they are bound to train for God. They rob God ; by making themselves proprietors instead of stewards of their children.

But, parent, this is not the object for which God gave you your station—that you might receive tribute for him, and then appropriate it to yourself. He did not place you there to share His glory ; and what is this you are doing ! You are making yourself the god and idol of your household. You stand not as the priest of your family, to dedicate yourself and them to the service of the Most High ! No ; exalted to this station, you sacrilegiously take that which belongs unto God ! Remember, “ God standeth in the congregation of the mighty ; He judgeth among the gods.” The day of your account is at hand. “ I have said ye are gods, but ye must die like men.” Forget not Herod, who received the adoration of the people, and gave not God the glory. God

never established the parental relation that it should detract from obedience and devotedness to himself.

Neither has God deputed you to hold this relation to the detriment of your children. If you care not for God, we would beseech you to think enough of your official relation to care for your little ones. If you have love for them, how can you hold your peace, when their affections rise no higher than yourself, and the things of this world; when you know that you must soon part from them to lie in the grave, and the things of this world will perish in the using? God never placed you, as a parent, to stand, yourself, or to thrust other things, between your children and heaven. Satan has thrown obstacles enough.

For what, then, does Jehovah set you as the parent of your family? Is it not, as has been already shown, that you may be, in that precious sphere, a type of Himself? Is it not that, in your character and administration, His own attributes may be illustrated, being reduced to the comprehension of infant spirits; so that, before the feeble vision can look upon the sun, it may behold the lesser star? Is it not that it may see in you, purity—that it may be governed and trained by you, wisely; and be taught to look beyond yourself, to

Him who is the God and Father of all? Yes; it is for this—that its infant affections may be developed under the influence of models adapted to its capacities. God has made you, and all that rise above you in society, to be but as lesser and greater models of Himself—as stepping-stones of the affections and energies to Himself. And will you rob God of his due, and lead your children down to everlasting death?

You apprehend, then, the object, for which God deputed you to stand as a lesser god to your own household. It is, that the affections and energies, being, in order of nature, first won to yourself, might rise in gradation from the smaller, to the greater; from the less, to the more glorious objects—till, by the spirit's passage though the disciplinary and expanding process of this mortal course it should rise, to have all the relations of this life blended in those of that eternal world, whence they were borrowed, and to which they should ever be tributary.

This is the system, of which human society is a part; and while every lesser god, from the parent to the king, leads expanding spirits upwards to the God of gods, all is harmonious—all is joyful. But when they each forget God, and seek their own—when parents, and rulers, and princes, and

kings, wander from their proper relations and pervert their office—when, instead of being lights set along to guide the infant spirit in its pathway from the cradle to the grave, they become decoys to destruction, and are lighted from hell instead of heaven; then the little spirit looks forth upon life helpless and alone: between itself and its God, there is a wide and dreary wilderness, in the mazes of which it lives to grope, and be lost forever. Then it is, as the Psalmist says, “The foundations of the earth are out of course”—the whole harmony of God’s arrangement is destroyed, and merged in awful confusion.

Such was the consequence of sin in our world. Such it would still be, unalleviated in its effects, had it not been for the gracious Son of God. He has opened a path through the wilderness, which He has sprinkled and marked with His blood. He is reinstating the foundations of the earth that became out of course; He is sanctifying parents and re-lighting these heavenly beacons, by the kindlings of His grace; and the promise is yet to be surely fulfilled when kings shall become nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers to spirits that seek the way to heaven.

Forget not, then, christian parents, the object for which you are constituted the temporary guar-

dians and gods of your households,—the end, *next to your own salvation, for which you have been illumined by the grace of Christ*; viz., that you may be lights to your households, and the conductors of their affections and obedience to Him who is the rightful God and Sovereign of every creature.

And let this end, not only be clearly apprehended, but **LET ITS IMPORTANCE BE DEEPLY FELT**. There are two matters which should draw upon your daily thoughts and anxieties more than any others—more than your business, or pleasures—more than your gain, or your loss,—and those are, the salvation of your own souls, and the salvation of your children; of those immortal spirits who derive from you their first impressions, and receive from you their earliest guidance. They are committed to your keeping; their eternal existence is commenced under your tutelage; and the ideas they receive—the dispositions they exercise—the principles of action they adopt, are wonderfully under your control. Too much cannot be said of the strength of early habits. When their power is considered, and the important relation which every infant development bears to the future character, how is it that the first exhibitions of depravity can be noticed with such prevalent levity and unconcern!

Does the *cunning* of your child begin to be seen, in its *artful concealment*? Does its spirit of self justification appear in its ingenious apologies? And perhaps you have turned away your face and smiled! And you have told it to your neighbor! But what!—would you smile at the symptoms of madness or idiocy in your child? Would they not fill you with anguish? But have you yet to learn that neither of these calamities is so alarming as the inherence of depravity? When you behold the first manifestation of its sure indwelling, it should fill you with sorrow, and drive you to prayer. There is no calamity like this! There is no disease like this which fastens on the soul, and corrupts for ever, without consuming!

BE CAREFUL TO ADMINISTER THE GOVERNMENT OF YOUR HOUSEHOLDS ON THE SAME PRINCIPLES WHICH GOD ADOPTS, AND IN THE EXERCISE OF THE SAME SPIRIT WHICH GOD MANIFESTS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF HIS CREATURES. The propriety of this direction is manifest, from what has been said, in previous pages, concerning the nature and constitution of the family, as a religious institution; harmonizing, in its design and adaptation, with the government of an holy God. As the gods of your households, and as types, there, of Him who is supreme, you are to govern, as Jehovah go-
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verns. Your administration is to harmonize with His. It should be your aim to cultivate, in those subject to your influence, the exercise of those very dispositions toward yourself, which you would have them extend, in riper years, to God. In other words, little children are to be trained—while their ideas are, as yet, chiefly confined to the family—in the exercise of those dispositions and habits toward their parents, which, for their future happiness and perfection, it is necessary that they exercise toward their Heavenly Father. It is manifest, that if these dispositions and habits to the earthly parent are inwrought in early life, there is nothing else needed, to secure the great end which every pious parent anxiously desires, but to have them transferred—or rather extended, in their higher and supreme developement, to God.

The inquiry now recurs, what are the dispositions toward God, which fit us for His presence, and secure to us His favor? In the chapter on the HABITS OF CHILDHOOD, it was shown that the great disposition of holy, and regenerated creatures is a disposition to affectionate and cheerful obedience. God must be loved and obeyed; so that every creature who would be happy in His dominion must ever yield the cheerful *obedience of love*. *This*, then, is the disposition which you must seek to develope and confirm from earliest infancy.

If, therefore, you would fit your children for heaven—governing them, in the earthly, as they must hereafter be governed in the heavenly family—you must *always require obedience to your commands.*

This is of the first importance—of the first importance in early life. And when I see, on every side, the woful neglect, in this very particular, which prevails in families where better things should be expected—Oh, that this printed page might *speak!*—that the earnestness of its tones might give emphasis to its words! But alas!—it is silent: and God, alone, can give it energy! Reader, may I ask you to *think*, and to ponder again and again, upon the unspeakable importance of this first rudiment of a right education!

Let the disposition of the immortal spirit be unruly—let its *will* rise and live supreme; and *you educate it for collision with Jehovah!* Every *instance* of insubordination, strengthens that habit which unfits the soul for subjection to the laws of God. With disobedience, or with the least *approximation* to it, the parent should never compromise. Such tendencies must be overruled; and the child be made to feel, in its earliest, what it must know, in all its future existence,—that there are wills superior to its own, to which it must bow

in cheerful subjection. The parent, by securing, in early infancy, this subjection to himself, is training the child in the way it should go, and is thus fulfilling the ordinance of Jehovah.

O, I have often wondered, yea, and sometimes shuddered, when I have seen the parent pass over the transgressions of his child—when I have heard the voice of parental authority answered only by a murmuring refusal. It matters not how trivial a requisition is, if it is but wise and reasonable—and such, it should always be; for, in this respect, you should govern as God governs, who never regards the least law as unimportant—when it is once reasonably made, it should *never yield* before the reluctance of the child.

I truly look upon that parent—and how many such?—who passes unnoticed the disobedience of a child—as I would look upon a heathen mother, while instructing her offspring in the principles and practices of some soul destroying religion; for every act of disobedience comprises the very *essence of sin*, and is a new step in the road to death. Wo to that parent who beholds his child disobedient, and neglects to intervene and enforce his authority. Such authority may be exercised mildly and kindly, while it is maintained firmly and constantly.

The child should *never know the time when it is not to obey immediately and cheerfully*. The beginnings of evil are small, and the first manifestations of disobedience *can be controlled*. Thus, if you will prevent the habit, it is well ; but if you allow the child to disregard your laws, you are recreant to God, who has given it to you to train up for Him—you are recreant to your own offspring, whom you are allowing to advance, unrestrained, to eternal ruin. O that parents would ever have before them the legitimate, awful *end* of filial disobedience, and they could not look upon the slightest symptoms of this *hell-disease*, without alarm and pain!

It is impossible, either for language, or for human conceptions, to magnify the evil of early disobedience. Imagination, even, cannot paint its danger in too high colors. And could a majority of professing christian parents but witness their own neglects in this very particular, together with their true bearings, it would fill them, I doubt not, with amazement, and cause them to cry out, *wo is me*. If your children do not obey the earthly parent whom they see, how can you expect them to obey that Heavenly Father whom they see not? If they do not yield to you, even an *outward* subjection, how can you expect them to obey that God

whose law searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men. An habitually disobedient child presents awfully alarming symptoms of confirmed depravity, and ripening ruin. If he disobeys you in a little thing, he will disobey in a greater ; thus advancing till he despises all those laws of God that control the inner, if not those that control the outer man.

As to the season of requiring obedience, it is sufficient to say that it is none too early to apply God's rules, when the child is old enough to obey the devil's ; or, in other words, it is full time to make a child *obey*, when it evidently knows enough to *disobey*.

Parents, be adjured, then, in the name of your children and of God—both of whom your responsibilities concern—be adjured, as you would avoid unfaithfulness to the latter, and cruelty to the former, *to establish and maintain parental authority*. Let it be even and mild—let it be constant and uncompromising, and then you will have fulfilled, in your sphere, this department of your duty, and you can leave the rest with God ; the child will pass from under your tutelage, into the more extended spheres of its existence, with that pliant will, and with those habits of subordination, which afford the best promise of ingrafted piety.

It is only as you thus systematically, diligently, and firmly require filial subjection to parental authority, that you establish, rightly, the first principle of your household administration. It is then, only, that you follow that heavenly model, after which your family is constituted, and, in the midst of which, the mild and holy will of our Great Father is cheerfully supreme.

But there is still other authority than that which *you* exercise, to which the infant child is to be taught subjection, that its character for *obedience* may be complete. The child has another, and a still nearer monitor than the parent: that monitor is *conscience*. Its voice speaks within, and whispers its accents to the little spirit, ere it can understand the language of the lips. God has planted it, there, that the parent may find it an auxiliary to his authority, if discreetly exercised; and that the child may not be without some guide, in case of parental neglect.

Let this conscience be often appealed to, by the looks and the tones of the parent, long ere the child can fully comprehend maturer language; for it is, when rightly developed, the sure voice of God, speaking in the soul. It is thus, and thus only, that you cultivate, in the child, a true and correct sense of personal responsibility, and ac-

countability to something higher than itself. Let all your own commands be simple, wise, and reasonable, that thus your authority, and that of conscience, being coincident, may strengthen each other.

Herein consists the tremendous, omnipotent authority of GOD'S HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS LAW—that *it coincides with the enlightened conscience*. Herein is its power to grind the poor transgressor, on the one hand; and on the other, to impart, to the conscientious and obedient, joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

If, then, as a lesser god, you would rule, in your dominion, as the great God rules in His, seek to develop the consciences of your children, and strengthen their authority. Teach them to *observe* that obedience stands connected with inward peace—that when they are bad, they are unhappy, and when they are good, they are happy. It is well, in all our corrections and dealings, to associate these two ideas strongly, and make our children feel that the prominent object of our discipline is, to make them *happy*—to drive away that evil spirit which has thrown its sullen drapery over them, and beclouded the wonted sunshine of their brows. The most glorious display of Nature is, when, after a summer's shower, she pre-

sents herself, arrayed in the robes of the sun, and stands smiling through her tears. And like it, only of more thrilling interest, is the scene of the nursery, when the conquered child throws its arms of artless love around the parents neck, and exclaims, "*Mother, I am so happy now!*"

That child learns, that obedience to parental authority, and to the dictates of its own conscience, constitutes its highest happiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE CULTURE OF FILIAL OBEDIENCE.

A GENERAL view has been taken, in the preceding chapter, of parental duties and responsibilities. The parent has been urged to be mindful of the object for which he is appointed to his station—of the high importance of that object—and the duty incumbent on him to administer his lesser government, upon those principles which he finds prevalent in that heavenly model after which his family is fashioned.

In speaking upon the latter topic, the duty of maintaining parental authority was specially enforced. But there arises here a question of great importance, a question concerning the MODE OF CULTIVATING FILIAL OBEDIENCE.

In answering this, let your attention be still directed to that family after which yours is to be modeled—that great family in heaven, where God

is the Father, and where all the children, from the highest angel, down to the least of the redeemed, are obedient, and are styled "angels that do his pleasure." God requires of them obedience; but in the exercise of what spirit does he require it? Does he utter his stern mandate, and make heaven tremble? Does he gather thunder, and make the universe shake with fear, as he communicates his will? By no means. "God is love;" and he governs heaven by love: he administers all its concerns in the unvarying exercise of a spirit, beaming with kindness. The thunder of his power and the terror of his majesty, are for the lawless and disobedient; on whom they operate for restraint, or punishment. It would be absurd to suppose the obedience of *heaven* to be secured by the chief agency of these divine attributes. It would be the spurious obedience of *fear*, which could neither please God, or give joy to the creature—and not the genuine *obedience of love*. God secures the obedience of heaven by displaying his goodness and holiness—his equity and wisdom, and thus diffusing love and adoration of his character, in the hearts of all around him. They obey, because they love him; and this is what gives an acceptable savour to all creature-offerings—that they *come from the heart*.

In precisely the same way does God display himself to man in the dispensations of his grace. He reveals his love. True—He has exhibited to us many things which operate on our fears; but it is not by these things that he aims to gain our obedience. They are manifested for the sole purpose of restraining us from greater and hazardous lengths in *disobedience*—to make us pause, and tremble, and cry out, “*What shall I do to be saved?*” The obedience which we might be led to yield, under the influence of such displays, is merely of that fitful and transitory nature, which many have yielded for a little while, when conscience has arisen in its power.

On Sinai, God displayed his awful attributes. But, why? It was because he came there as a Lawgiver to the disobedient, for whom, and for whom alone, the Law was ever reduced to statute form. He came not to call forth love; but to impress sinners with the truth, that it was a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the LIVING GOD—he came to promulge his violated law, and to engrave it before the eyes of a rebellious people. Hence it was, that not even so much as a beast should touch the mountain lest he die! And it is for a corresponding effect, in impressing with fear the

lawless and the disobedient, that the solemn threatenings of God's word are written.

But different are those dealings which are appropriately termed, the dealings of his grace—different his manifestations when he determined to reclaim a people from among the children of men. He wins those that are his, by love ; and he governs them by love. He speaks to them in accents of kindness, of invitation, of forbearance : instead of threatening, he gives them promises : instead of terror, he shows them tenderness. He had this design when he went to guilty Adam, and promised him a Saviour ; he had this design in all his promises to the patriarchs ; he had this design—and it then shone forth the brightest—when he gave his only begotten Son, and caused his own glories to be displayed to human vision, in the person of the man Christ Jesus.

Thus, an unceasing and glorious manifestation of the loveliness of his own character, in all these displays and provisions of his grace, is what we plainly behold as that upon which he depends, instrumentally, to reclaim us to a spirit of acceptable obedience. And, accordingly, we find, in the experience of the earthly church, that men may behold the terrors of the Almighty, till their spirits are well nigh crushed—but they are no

better. It is not, until they behold the wonderful *love* of God, in Christ, and forget themselves in contemplating it, and experience the mysterious, but joy-giving sensations of corresponding love, that they enter, fully, the family of the redeemed. Love has won them, and they obey, they devote themselves cheerfully and forever to God. They were melted down under the invitation, "Come unto me, ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and they find their love kindled still more, as they read, "In my Father's house there are many mansions," &c.

Now is it not manifest from this brief glance at the way in which God rules his family in heaven, and his family on earth, that he aims to secure, and that he actually *does* secure their obedience, only by love?—and that he, therefore, displays his glories to them to excite their love? In heaven, there are no terrors around him; on earth, where he has purposes of mercy, his love is pre-eminently displayed; while, in hell, only, where there is no hope, do his frowns and terrors dwell.

If, then, wherever he would perpetuate, or cultivate obedience, our great Father makes pre-eminently displays of love, in order to *win* that obedience as a *cheerful* offering; are not earthly parents taught, thereby, the spirit, in the exercise

and manifestation of which, they should govern their households? Do they desire to cultivate a spirit of cheerful, 'acceptable obedience?—let them win it by love. The one that is to be obeyed must always be the one to be *loved*. It is so with our heavenly Father, and it should be so with every earthly father. If your children love you, they will delight to please you, and they will feel sorrowful when they displease you. This is the way that we should all feel toward God; and this is the way that you should train your little children to feel toward y u.

Fathers, upon you especially rests the government of your families. You are supreme there, and you give a tone to all within. Your authority is the law in a higher sense than that of the mother. And, therefore, it is that a pre-eminent benignity should mark *your* deportment. If you would have yourselves obeyed chiefly, you must render yourselves loved, at least equally, by your children.

That maternal influence is generally greater than that of the father, is not questioned, as a *fact*—though it may be questioned as a *necessary, and a reasonable fact*; where such influence is greater, it is because the *manifestation* of maternal love is greater. But why should this be? If the

father is actually constituted chief in *authority*, is it consistent that any other one should be constituted chief in filial *affections*? Does not actual supremacy in *authority* necessarily imply that no other one rises above an *equality* in dominion over the affections of the governed? How *can* the father be supreme in the former, while the mother surpasses him in the latter. Such an unequal proprietorship in filial affections, (as is very common)—and such an ascendant influence on the part of the mother, as necessarily follows, was never designed; it wars with the intended constitution of the family, and is therefore unnecessary. Fathers may be equally loved by their children, and they should guard against that ascetic influence of their avocations, by which they too often forfeit their appropriate share of ardent, filial affection.

It will always be observed, in consistency with the foregoing remarks, that where the power of affection is diminished, the power of control is diminished also. In a loosely governed family, though extravagant indulgences are lavished, there are fewer bonds of affection; while a regulated, disciplined household, where wholesome and painful correction has been wisely administered, is the one around which the bonds of filial and parental love

are most securely fastened. Indeed affection, and a wise authority, are so inseparably wedded, by Him who has ordered the constitution of all things, that the state of the one affords a remarkably sure indication of the state of the other.

It is not only true of fathers, but, frequently, of mothers also, that they fail to hold that high place in filial affection that they should ; and many such parents wonder why their children are so disobedient. You are sure that you have commanded enough—watched enough—corrected enough ; and it is very possible that your children will affirm each of these particulars ;—but still your children remain unruly, and they pay nothing like an appropriate attention to your wishes. If it is so, then, in applying the foregoing principles to your case, it is evident that they do not love you as they ought ; for if they felt their hearts full of love, and tenderness, and every filial feeling, they would not—they could not do so.

How has it occurred in your case?—that you have failed of winning filial affections. Perhaps you have mistaken the end of punishment, and, because Solomon has enjoined the rod, you have freely used it. It is, by no means, to be said, that the rod is never to be used ; but it is of the highest importance that the physician wisely adminis-

ter his remedies : it is not safe to administer the same medicine in all diseases, or in all stages of the same disease, merely because the medicine is known to be indispensable to the profession. So the rod, while indispensable in all spheres of human control, is not blindly to be seized as the ever suitable means. It frequently affords the shortest and most summary process, whereby to obtain an immediate result ; and it is to be regretted that so many seem inconsiderately to use it for its labor saving advantages. But those disciplinarians will reap but little success, who aim to save *labor* in their early work. We must learn to be patient, and *pains-taking*, and always, while we seek to enforce present, have an eye to future obedience. And since every remedy, in proportion to the efficiency of its action, requires wisdom in its administration, the *rod* should be applied with care, and with a right apprehension of its appropriate effects.

By the *rod*, is understood to be signified *correction*, without any limit as to the mode ; which may be either physical, or moral. Its immediate and legitimate operation is in checking and restraining disobedience, and it can operate, therefore, only negatively in producing genuine obedience. For all the inherent virtue it possesses, it can no more be relied on to cultivate a spirit of positive obe-

dience, and to advance the great end of education, than the punishment of the lost can be expected eventually to purge away their dross and prepare them for heaven. Reliance is to be placed, in cultivating the obedience of your children, upon an entirely different instrumentality—upon the unvarying display of your kindness, mildness, equity and love. If this fails to beget, with the blessing of God, a corresponding love in your child to you, and thus to secure his cheerful obedience, as God secures angels' and as Christ secures yours—then your child is, to present appearance, as verily lost, as is the sinner who will not be won by the displays of redeeming love. The rod, and the prison, while they may yet be of use in restraining and hedging in his disobedience, can no more reclaim him than hell can reclaim the incorrigible.

But still there is an advantage in using the rod. This advantage, however, is found among its secondary effects. In perfect consistency with the previous statements, it may be maintained, that when applied by our heavenly Father to his earthly children, for their benefit, it has no inherent efficacy in reclaiming them. The benefit of the chastisement flows from the love that administers it. The rod causes God's people to smart—and they pause—and here all would end; but they

look and see their Father's *love*—they think of the tears of Jesus as he *wept* over refractory Jerusalem, and this recognition of the *tenderness* of their Father is that which reclaims them to obedience. The rod would never do it; but it reveals the love which lies behind it, and speaks through it; for it is not, *in itself*, a means of grace, any more than is everlasting punishment.

Punishment, then, is efficacious in two respects. It is a salutary and effectual restraint upon those who trample under foot all the remonstrances of love—and it is a needful token of paternal displeasure, to touch the hearts of those who are generally obedient. For the former end, it is used by God, and may be freely used by us for the utterly incorrigible, who must be kept in *chains of suffering and fear*; while for the latter purpose, God employs it for the benefit of his people; and parents, in imitation of the great Father's example, may, in like manner, use it for their hopeful and affectionate children. But let it not be forgotten that punishment, whenever resorted to, in hopeful cases, is to be used only as an emblem of painful displeasure. So that, really, *the efficacy of all your corrections and discipline must depend upon the love which your child bears you*. If he so loves you that he cannot bear your displeasure,

then the needed correction will touch his little heart. But if he loves you not at all, or but little, the benefit of your discipline will be proportionate. Thus it is all-important that your child should entertain for you a supreme and ardent affection ; else, all that you do toward cultivating obedience in early life will be of little avail.

In too many lamentable instances this seems to be overlooked, and parents who are truly anxious, and conscientious seize the rod, and forget that, as certain kinds of evil spirits go out only by prayer and fasting, so disobedience can be effectually driven from the heart of a child only by love : and they ply the rod ; and they speak in tones of sternness and severity, and the mandate goes forth with an accent that makes every infant heart tremble. And it is very possible that the parent does all this without an angry feeling, but merely under the influence of a commendable determination that his authority be sustained. But he errs in executing his purpose ; the child *feels* the rod, but he does not *see* the love. The parent may be conscious of its real indwelling, but he does not *reveal it*. Sinai, in its influence upon our lost race, effects nothing in cultivating obedience, until we read the same laws, shedding a milder radiance from Calvary.

But how, asks the parent, shall I show this spirit of love which I acknowledge is the spirit whereby God rules heaven, and Jesus Christ holds my heart? It seems to me that my children ought to know that I love them and be mindful that I provide for them; and if they would only *think*, they might know that it gives me nothing but pain to punish them.

But, reader, it is very possible that your children do *not* know as much as they ought to, and it is quite sure that they do not *think* as much as they ought to; and if they *did*, they might be very likely to think, for ought they *discover*, that you punish them in the same spirit in which they seek to enforce their wills among one another.

Suppose your Heavenly Father proceeded on a similar assumption in his dealings with you, and with all the family of man. He could surely do it with much more righteousness. Suppose he had said of this lost race, when he first entertained the thought of *displaying* his love to effect our redemption—why should I do this? They ought to know that I love them—that I built the earth, and garnished it for their dwelling place—that I uphold them, and give them all they have. If they would only think, they must know that, *as I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.*

This was not the language that was used in heaven. It might all be true and just, but God condescended to *show* us his love—to *declare* his pity, and to stoop to our blindness; and Jesus Christ stooped even unto death, in his accommodation to our depravity, that he might convince us—of what was written as plain as noonday, above us, if we would only look—that “*God so loved the world.*” Now we see it; it touches our hearts: the voice of love, speaking from Calvary, awakens our love; and the displeasure of such love, we cannot endure; we fly every sin that wounds it. It is verily true that we never should have been reclaimed, had not God condescended to our blindness, and wrought out, in blood, the *demonstration* that he loved us.

Throughout the foregoing remarks, it will be observed that the Heavenly Model of a Christian Family has been kept constantly in view. The author trusts that it has not been consulted in vain; and that the view of it will not fail to be instructive to parents who desire to be followers of God in the duties of their parental relations, as well as in their personal characters.

If what has been said is just, it cannot fail to appear, as a necessary pre-requisite to filial obedience, THAT THE AFFECTIONS OF THE CHILD BE CON-

CENTRATED UPON THE PARENTS ABOVE ALL EARTHLY PERSONS OR OBJECTS. True obedience must have its origin in love ; and as the obedience required in this relation is of the highest earthly nature, so the love subsisting here should be the strongest.

Parents should use every lawful endeavour to cultivate the affections of their children, that leading them in the habits of early filial piety, they may prepare them for a higher piety toward their Eternal Father. And as God cultivates your obedience by appealing to and exciting and strengthening your love ; so do to your children. Do something more than provide for their wants ; stoop in numberless ways to *show them that you love them*. Since God accommodates his demonstrations to your criminal blindness ; much more should you condescend to the feeble minds of your children. Use every endearment to win them to you. Never turn from them suddenly, or receive them coldly, as they run to greet your approaching footsteps. Teach them, not only that they *may*, but that you *expect* them to be joyful at the sound of your coming. Let them caress you ; and then, caress them in return. It is unworthy of you, as a parent, to call this *trifling business* : for it is hard to find many things so important. It is more important than your money. God thus

stoops to us ; giving us every day some extra tokens of his love ; winning us by unexpected, unmerited pains. And when, in like manner, you win your children, and convince them, by demonstrations adapted to their understanding and addressing their hearts, that you delight in *their* love—then, you may expect *them* to delight in *your* smiles and to grieve at the tokens of your displeasure—then, if, for any misdemeanor, they see, not sternness, but sadness and sorrow clothing your anxious brow, and shrouding its wonted smiles, they will *feel* the rebuke, and seek not to grieve you again.

It is delightful to witness those families where the tokens of parental displeasure which, perchance, from time to time, are needful, take effect upon the children's hearts, and draw forth tears of child-like, affectionate penitence. Who does not see that such parents have a mighty hold on filial obedience ; and that, by a wise culture, they are laying, in these infantile exercises of their children towards themselves, a promising foundation of gospel penitence and contrition, for the full developments of which we may look, with some reasonable expectation, when the child's enlarged and chastened conceptions begin to apprehend its relations to its Heavenly Father ?

Remember, then, that with the successful cultivation of the obedience, you must unite the cultivation of the affections of your children. Then your discipline will avail. Whereas, on the other hand, correction will only prove an irksome restraint, of short duration, from which they will violently break loose in future years.

AVOID ANY WORDS OR TONES, IN ADDRESSING YOUR CHILDREN, BUT THOSE THAT ARE REplete WITH KINDNESS. In this, also, the example of our Heavenly Father instructs us. There is an inexpressible tenderness pervading all his remonstrances against the sins of his people. While he threatens judgments, and sore chastisements, he yet remembers mercy, and promises to return unto them, if they will return unto him. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Let the parent whose tones of reproof are harsh and forbidding, turn and read the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, and ponder its heavenly spirit, and ask himself for what he would consent that such language be banished from the Bible.

And now, beloved parent, if you would be like God—if you would keep him before your eyes as

the great prototype of the parental relation—then guard your words, and let every tone be love. This may be enjoined as an universal rule; whether you are making a requisition, or reproving for disobedience. If you speak, speak pleasantly; speak *moderately*; for often hasty words are mistaken for angry ones. If you have a requisition to make of a child which you think may be unpleasant, make it with peculiar kindness of tone; if there is a reluctance, and you have to command, look pleasant while you do it; and let your accents, while they are firm, have much of the music of love. If you are compelled to correct, do not be content to *say* that you are pained, but let it be *shown*, in the tones and looks of continuing, unchanging love. And let the beginning, and the middle, and the end of the contest find you in the possession of the same love. When the child yields a *cheerful* obedience, then smile upon it, and stoop to tell it, in its own simple language, *how sad you did feel*.

“Provoke not your children to wrath;” do not be peevish; do not be fretful; do not be stern with your children. Our Heavenly Father is not so with us. When he corrects us, the Spirit whispers, “Whom he loveth, he chasteneth.”

The following anecdote, from the Mother’s Mag-

azine, vol. vii. p. 263, is too apposite to be omitted. "Conversing the other day with an interesting little girl, between the ages of six and seven, I took occasion to impress upon her mind the debt of gratitude due from her to her heavenly Parent for bestowing upon her so good and kind a father, whom every body loves. I was perfectly thunder-struck by her answer. Looking me full in the face with her soft blue eyes, she replied, 'He never speaks kind to *me*.' Perhaps this christian father, harrassed with the cares of business, was unconscious that he had roughly checked the fond attentions of his child;—but could cares, or the interruptions of his child, excuse unkindness, or a total want of tokens of endearment? Will fathers examine their habits on this point?"

It will aid all parents, who feel, under the first impulse, fretted by the fond and well meant interruptions of an affectionate child, to think, ere they repel the intrusion, of their own childlike relation to an Heavenly Father. The thought will lead them to hear the words, or receive the short caress, and *then* dismiss the unwitting intruder with a smile of reciprocated love. So we would have *our* Father do.

MANIFEST FORBEARANCE TOWARD YOUR CHILDREN; for a relentless spirit is the last that fallen

man should exhibit to a fellow creature. Forgive your children, and restore them to your confidence—even as your Father forgiveth you.

PARENTS, ESPECIALLY FATHERS, SHOULD SEEK, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, TO BE WITH THEIR CHILDREN. Remember that home has claims which, in their sphere, are not secondary to the claims of the counting house, or the shop. Some parents are necessarily absent more than others; but all should remember that if they would have their children's affections, they must give those children some of their time and attention. Our Heavenly Father *communes with his children*.

Thus, by this manifestation of uniform parental tenderness, there is reasonable hope that the affections of the child will be developed, and there will be laid the true and permanent foundation of filial obedience.

But to possess and manifest this uniform spirit of love, requires great vigilance and self-control on the part of the parent. He must seek daily, at the foot of the cross, to be imbued with the spirit of heaven. As an abiding disposition, it is of the grace of God. The father of the *household* must draw nigh unto the *Father of all*. And when, christian parents, you do this and discharge your duties in any good measure as they have

been described—then you will have indeed introduced into the government of your families, the same great principles and spirit by which the Eternal Father governs his children;—you will have faithfully modeled your family after the heaven above, that it may be, in itself, a little heaven on earth.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEASON OF PARENTAL EFFORT.

THE parental duties and the filial habits, of which the previous chapters have been treating, are manifestly those that concern early childhood; and it is to the first and earliest periods of existence that the observations which they contain have their prominent adaptation. It is of the importance of that season, as the one of surest hope, and as the one, therefore, most inviting to parental diligence and effort, that we would speak in this chapter.

The monstrous doctrine is not without its open *advocates*—that children should be left unbiassed, during their early years, by any religious teachings, lest the judgment of their maturer age be unduly influenced. But if the family is, as maintained throughout these pages, a religious institution established by God for the infant and youth-

ful culture of immortal beings; then nothing can be more absurd than such a sentiment. It overlooks the very *object* of the family, and discerns not the wise and harmonious adaptations with which its internal constitution and relations abound. And forgetting that plain, antagonist fact, that in the field of the world the enemy is sowing tares, it bases itself on the foolish and empty presumption that while the parents refuse to pre-occupy the infant mind with good, the devil and the world will—from *courtesy*, we presume—withhold the seeds of evil.

But such an error needs not a refutation. It is only to be desired that all those who will readily unite in its rejection, would as cheerfully adopt its opposite as the ground of their efficient action; manifesting an appropriate zeal to improve the golden opportunities of *early childhood*.

IT IS THE FIT SEASON. There is a period when the infant spirit cannot look or know aught beyond the family circle;—when the influences that mould the character are all gathered around the domestic fireside, and brought under the power of parental control. How careful should parents be lest, at this precious season, they revel only in its sweets and forget its duties. Here, and at this time, the child can know no other god than its

father. It loves its mother, and obeys her commands ; but it sees her, as a faithful wife, looking up to her husband, and acquiescing in his will. The aspect of every thing and the tone of every arrangement in a well regulated household, teaches the child that the father is the *head* ; the centre of household affections, and the object of household dependence : he is supreme, and the little child knows nought beyond.

Let the adult readers of this little book but recur to the feelings of their childhood. With what sentiments did your father inspire you ? Was he not the *strongest* man—the *wisest* man—the *richest* man—the *best* man ? With most or all these attributes, your infant thoughts invested him : there was a season when they went not, and could not go, beyond him. Even after, and long after you learned the name of God, your conceptions of him—through the feebleness of your intellects—were too dim to modify essentially your view of the earthly father.

And some, perhaps, are ready to seize upon this very statement, and argue that religious training cannot be available at such a period—that, because the child cannot understand about God and Jesus Christ, and the great doctrines of salvation, therefore, hopeful parental effort must be de-

layed until a season of further intelligence, and a more developed understanding. It is the influence of this secret impression, we fear, that is manifest in such lamentable neglect. But how does it stand the test of the fact regarding this very earliest period of life, that—

IT IS THE INDICATED SEASON. It is indicated as the appropriate season of religious culture by scripture ordinances. There is the ordinance of Infant Baptism—useful, surely, in this respect. The rite of circumcision, which is of corresponding import, was, by express statute, to be performed on the eighth day. It is a fair inference from this and other considerations, that the ordinance of infant baptism should be performed as soon after the birth of the child as circumstances will wisely permit. But why so early?—unless it be an indication from God that your spiritual responsibilities cannot be too early felt, nor faithful efforts for the good of your child be too early made. You are bidden to bring it in solemn ordinance, while yet it can scarce turn a steady eye, or raise a feeble hand, and baptize it in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Does not the very ordinance bid you awake to your duty from the very commencement of your infant's life? And where is your thought that you must wait till your child

can *understand about God*, ere you betake yourself to the employment of hopeful instrumentalities? Let this particular import of the baptismal ordinance be weighed!

There seem to have been two things that our Lord was mainly anxious should be engraven on the memories and the hearts of his followers. The first was *the sacrifice of himself*, as the foundation of all our hopes: hence the institution of the Lord's Supper. The second was *his covenant grace in behalf of our offspring, and our indicated duty of early and constant fidelity to their souls*: hence the ordinance of Infant Baptism.

Moreover the plain and repeated injunctions of the Scriptures concerning early culture, are too unequivocal and imperative to be misunderstood. And then, to all these things we may add the inquiry, whether the opposing idea is not in itself preposterous? Can it be that in the most important branch of education, there can no efficient advance be made, for the first ten or twelve years of life? Did our Saviour think so when he took *little children* and blessed them, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven?"—Nay:—the ordinance of baptism,—the tenor of

God's word,—the example of our Saviour,—our own reflections teach us—nay.

Both the *fitness* of the season, and the *indications of God*, lead to the conclusion,—not only that early effort should be made,—but that a little child is susceptible of strictly religious training, and *may* become an object of special divine favor, before it can understand any thing beyond the sphere of the family, or look upon any being as superior to its own loved father. And hence we have exhibited the father as the god of such an infant, and have enjoined it on the parent to administer, correspondingly, the affairs of his household. And we hold that the *religion of such little children*, as far as its manifestations are concerned, must consist, for the most part, during that period in which they are too young to understand much about God, in exercising the same dispositions and forming the same habits toward the earthly father, that they are hereafter to possess toward God. And the *usual* operations of divine grace, in blessing and succeeding parental exertions, and in answering parental prayer, are to be seen,—not in the little infant outstripping its years, and descanting on the wonders of redeeming love, and striding on to angels' themes—but, rather, *in its faithful, affectionate, conscientious and cheerful fulfilment of its earthly father's will.*

Is your little child obedient; does it readily yield its own will to yours, and pleasantly take up its cross because its father bids it? Does it *love* you with all its heart; does its desire and delight seem to be to live in your smile; is its little heart ever ready to break with anguish, whenever you may feel bound to say, in sober tone, "*My child, why did you thus?*" Is that the spirit of your little child? And, were you called to stand around its lifeless form, might we not say to you, with double assurance?—Weep not; its habits were those of *obedience* and *love*, and *contrition for its sins*—against you; these were the habits of that immortal spirit; and when, passing from this lesser sphere, it beholds the earthly parent no more, and opens its infant eyes and conceptions to the glories of the heavenly, it will have the same habits, and enter, therefore, to dwell with God forever.

But it should be borne in mind, that so far as such a character as this is considered as evidence of the little child's religion, and that the foolishness which a corrupt nature had bound up in the heart was overruled—so far it should be also regarded as the *effect of divine grace succeeding parental effort*; that God may have the appropriate honor of being the author of all in us that is acceptable in his holy sight.

On the other hand, is your child disobedient; does it fret and is it sour; does it transgress your rules and manifest no concern, save what the dread of punishment inspires? Does it think much more of itself than of you, and care about its own way, only; and about your way, none?

While it is readily conceded that there is a difference, both in the moral and physical temperament of children, and that neither the same amount of parental fidelity, or of divine grace, will effect the same even, quiet and affectionate subjection in one child that it will in another:—and while this concession is no more than a just consolation for those faithful and anxious parents who may have children possessed, through physical or other causes, of peculiarly unfavorable traits—still it must be said of such an habitually disobedient child as is described in the foregoing paragraph—*the parents have neglected it*. And, more than this, were we to see that little child laid in an early grave, while we could never, without awful presumption, undertake to pronounce adversely concerning it; still, what parent could, were it his own child, speak with the *same* comforting assurance of its future state, that he could, had it manifested a subdued, and affectionate, and gracious disposition in all its embryo earthly relations?

What conscientious parent could refrain from asking himself, if that child never loved, or obeyed me, its earthly parent, how can I expect it to enter at once, with an obedient and devoted disposition, among the children of God? How could he escape the sting of awful guilt that he had not taught that child obedience, and won, by every art, its opening affections?

Let early infancy and childhood, then, be the season of diligent culture. The child is capable of performing its allotted duties; and in the discharge of those duties, within the sphere of its limited conceptions, consists its religion; the child commends itself to man, and it commends itself to God. In the earliest stage of its rational existence, in the narrow walls of its nursery, the world, open to its mind, is perfect in its varieties; and all, *there*, is under the eye and control of the parent. Who will let slip this transient opportunity? It flies on the wings of light; and when watchfulness is neglected here, traits, that might have been crushed or modified in the bud, will fail of being discovered, until they are too powerful and mighty to resist. Since its improvement is so invaluable, it is painful to record that—

IT IS A NEGLECTED SEASON. There is not much reason to complain that parents entirely fail of

feeling anxious for their children. At some periods, all christian parents must experience great solicitude for their offspring. They are often found praying for them, and admonishing them; and are often witnessed with hearts aching because of their youthful waywardness, or because of the confirmed irreligion and thoughtlessness of their manhood.

But here is their grand mistake—their anxieties, their prayers, their counsels, their pleadings, their tears are *too late*. They allow childhood to slip by unheeded. They are then amused with the developing intelligence, and cheered with the innocent prattle, and enraptured by the unfolding affections of their little ones. In the midst of parental *delights*, parental *responsibilities* are unheeded, and deferred to a future day. And when youth appears, characterised by utter thoughtlessness, they begin to feel, as they should have felt from the first dawning of their child's existence: they begin to pray in earnest—to watch, with pain, filial insensibility to spiritual things, and growing impatience of parental restraints. Now they begin to think of instructing and importuning them. But they shrink from the task lest it be irksome to the *unwonted* ears of their children; or lest their own tongues should refuse to be un-

loosed from the silence of by-gone years; and they beseech the minister, or some pious friend, to perform the duty of faithfulness which God had prepared *them*, by the alliance of nature, to discharge more easily and effectually than any others.

And when youth is seen merging itself into manhood, while yet the children are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, then are the sensibilities of devout parents more keenly awakened, and their anxieties assume a still greater magnitude; and, at times, they feel the full measure of parental solicitude.

But these feelings should be possessed earlier. These prayers and tears, these feelings of anxiety and solicitude, prompting to earnest effort and faithful discipline, should mingle with the earliest feelings of parental delight, and should be experienced and borne amid the earliest developements of their offspring's childhood; for the manifestations of youth are but the growth, and the developements of manhood, but the harvest of infantile and childhood education.

Ah! you now mourn over your wayward children as they *advance in life*; but did you really mourn over their disobedience in comparative *in-*

fancy? Oh! if you could but have foreseen things as you now behold them, how would your *anxiety*, as well as your delight, have been awakened, as your eyes first beheld their dawning existence! And why did you not foresee that there was an inevitable, and growing, and strengthening connection, between the *first habits* of the infant and every habit and thought of its subsequent existence? Its earliest notes of shrill anger should have been notes of alarm to your soul! Had you then felt, as you have since felt, you might have saved yourself many restless nights, many aching hours, and many disappointed hopes!

When childhood is neglected, and discipline is deferred till the child grows older, and manhood, even approaches; then, growing impatience under unaccustomed restraints, united with the impetuosity of unchecked ardor, oppose mighty obstacles to parental efforts; and the parent, too often, is left to sit down and weep over an unsanctified child.

Remember, ye parents who may yet profit by admonition, that *early childhood* is the season of hope—the season that should stir up your anxieties and prayers. If they sleep during this period, they will probably be awakened by developments which you should have *prevented*, but which you cannot *change*.

CHILDHOOD IS THE SEASON RENDERED HOPEFUL BY SCRIPTURE PROMISES. The very fitness of the season unfolds a promise; and were nothing farther manifest than the truths contained in this little volume, concerning the great end and the divine adaptations of the family, there would be enough of unfailling, heavenly promise, to inspire parental hopes, and excite parental effort. But our assurances are not those of the clearest inference, merely; we have unequivocal, written promises; and were there no other than that embodied in the words, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and *when he is old he will not depart from it,*" we should find, in that, a sufficient endorsement of our previous assurances, and might repose safely in the conclusion, that between parental fidelity and filial rectitude, there is an unfailling connection.

A farther discussion of this covenanted and established connection will be waived here, that it may be entered upon more fully in a subsequent chapter.

Since childhood is the hopeful season of parental effort, it is important that that effort be intelligent, systematic and persevering. The phraseology employed by the wise man, "*Train up a child,*" &c., signifies a course of conduct which, far

from being the result of occasional impulses, accords with deliberate and intelligent system. An end must be distinctly apprehended, and all the means employed must be wisely adapted to its promotion.

Here opens a field of thought and investigation, the least view of which will establish the conviction that a *thoughtless* parent can never be a *faithful* one; and that a faithful parent must be one of sound discretion and quick discernment. Indeed well trained children afford no contemptible evidence of parental *intellect*, as well as of parental fidelity and piety.

But where, and how numerous are the parents who are in the daily habit of meditating upon the principles and mode of wisely discharging their obligations? Yet, it is a subject which the sight of their children should bring under constant review.

The influence of every habit of your own upon your child should be pondered; the best methods of checking its faults and cultivating its virtues should be investigated and understood—and every useful hint, whether derived from others, or suggested by your own reflections should be introduced into your daily administration. But it is a melancholy fact that many (and may we not say *most*) parents seem to think no more of principles

and system in the training of their children, than they do of the laws of the heavenly bodies: and they are as verily strangers to those truths which form the basis of all correct education, as they are to the sciences of Geometry and Mechanics.

Duties should have our attention and thoughts in proportion to their importance. Would you think of building a house without a knowledge of the art; or of managing and directing your domestic concerns, without being first versed in the proprieties and rules of the undertaking? But why be diligent and studious in these worldly avocations and overlook the training of those spirits whom God has given you in precious charge; why be anxious about every improvement in housewifery—every new principle which may save labor or expense; or why, ye fathers, be studious of every change in the times which may effect the property you hope to amass and entail on your children—why be so anxious to establish those political principles which you deem essential to the highest prosperity of your country; and still neglect to investigate and apply those priceless principles which, adopted in the government of your children, will tend to insure them the blessing of God—a competency here—and eternal life hereafter?

Let youthful parents, before whom all these things are opening, ponder well their duties. There are three comprehensive errors which they will be wise to avoid, viz., parental control is not established early enough—it is not systematic and even enough in its maintenance—and it is relaxed or relinquished too early. When children, especially boys, begin to emerge from childhood they too generally emerge from parental watchfulness and restraint. It is equally criminal for the parent to allow a habit at *sixteen* or *twenty*, as to allow it earlier. Where *childhood* is improved as it should be, there is but little, if any difficulty, in guiding the youth and the man.

CHAPTER X.

ON GUIDING THE AFFECTIONS TO GOD.

IF it should seem to any that the parental office has been unduly magnified in the recent chapters, while God has been rather forgotten, and that affections toward the former have been substituted for affections to the latter, it will be borne in mind that hitherto, as far as the details of instruction have been considered, reference has been professedly had to that first period of life when the child knows nothing beyond the family, and can look no higher for a god than to its own father. It is only while he is in this sphere—a sphere evident to all—that it has been asserted the effects of divine grace will generally be manifest in habits of filial obedience, tenderness and love. But, in this particular, it is conceded, we are not too strictly to limit God. Such as have been represented, may be the more common manifestations of grace

in very early childhood, while it is not to be denied, that *little children* are sometimes wonderfully taught of God, and are made to exhibit a deep knowledge of divine things. The world is not without many authentic records of such; and it is delightful to contemplate them as demonstrations of the truth that the Spirit of God teaches men; for on no other principle can such instances be explained.

But if such are the only evidences of childhood piety, and of the indwelling of grace, where is our hope for the large portion of our race who die in early childhood? May not the faithful, praying parents that are called to weep over the dying agonies of an obedient and tender child who has distinguished himself, during the three or four short years of his existence, by love, and tenderness, and cheerful subjection to them—may they not feel an assurance, when they commend him to God, and may they not be comforted in view of his death, even though he has not spoken wonders, and manifestly is ignorant of the nature of that great change that awaits him? Who can refuse this comfort, especially to pious and *faithful* parents? But if they have any title to it, that title rests on the previous assumption, that grace was resident in its little heart; “for by grace are ye

saved"—whence it becomes evident that grace may exist when its manifestations are confined to the developements of the child within that little sphere where the earthly parents stand as the highest objects of distinct recognition and love.

The other class of cases, which are freely conceded as existing, are to be regarded as *extra-ordinary*, rather than as establishing a standard whereby our expectations are to be unchangeably graduated: they convey important encouragement to parental prayer and effort, by establishing, beyond controversy, the fact, that God can as really control and sanctify infant minds, as the spirits of adults, and by exposing the futility of that objection which resting upon the assumed incapacity of children, throws its shelterless protection over parental inaction and neglect. The contemplation of such past instances, and the occurrence of every new one should awaken to new faith and exertions, and to stronger hopes, because of the conviction which is rendered thus firmer and firmer, that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he *can* perfect his praise.

All that should be insisted upon, as a proper encouragement, is that parents are not necessarily to infer that their labor is lost if their children fail of exhibiting astonishing marks of deep spirit-

ual knowledge; they may be really sanctified, though their understandings are not wonderfully enlarged. The more common evidences of their change are to be sought in the habits of a subdued, cheerful, affectionate, obedient spirit—a spirit that is contrite—wounded—*bruised*, at the thought of having merited the displeasure of a fond and loved parent. Such a spirit, when perfected, is, seemingly, godliness in embryo; it is the religion of the child's sphere, and apparently contains the *seeds* of gospel love, penitence, and obedience; it may be regarded as standing connected with grace, either as the result of its actual operation, or as a stock which God is carefully and graciously preparing for the future ingrafting of piety.

But your children are to pass from the nursery to the scenes of active life; they are to outgrow the notions of childhood—to become citizens of a world without the family, and the more direct subjects of a dominion that is over all, and that endureth forever. And the question has perhaps already arisen in the mind of the reader—how shall I effect the transfer of these feelings which by faithfulness, and love, and the blessing of God, I have been enabled to cultivate in my little child toward me—how shall I effect their transfer from

me as their supreme object, unto that God upon whom alone they can thus lawfully rest?

This is a right and highly important inquiry. It shows that the one proposing it is conscious of being but a *steward* of the affections and obedience of his children—that he desires not to monopolize the former for his own delight, or the latter for his own convenience; but to “render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.”

Perhaps some are inclined to particularize the inquiry, and ask when—at what period of life is this transfer to be made; and when ought I to labor, and expect to see my child recognizing God, and looking, in the exercise of his filial dispositions, higher than myself? A part of this question cannot be answered. It is left with God to determine the times and seasons of all these things. In the case of a child who has become an actual subject of divine grace in infancy—as was true of the prophet Samuel—the opening of the mind, and the consequent transfer of the affections from the smaller to the larger sphere, is not, like regeneration, an instantaneous work; but, like all the transitions of this life from one stage to another—from infancy to childhood; from childhood to youth; from youth to manhood, and from man-

hood to old age, the precise lines of which cannot be denoted, and which vary according to the peculiar developements of individuals. There is an age, of which we can say—the child is too young to comprehend the relations of its eternal existence; and there is another, when the faculties of the youth are sufficiently developed. But the two stages are so blended that it is impossible to assign the transition to any definite period. Of these periods, God only knows.

But as to when you are to *labor* with reference to this transition, it is plain to reply—*at all times; during every stage of your children's pupilage.*

The question returns, *how* is it to be effected? If the Lord has sanctified your child in the earlier period of its existence—your instructions and love and holy example having been rendered efficient, by divine grace, to its right culture—then it is already a child of God; it is already in the covenant of grace—that sure and everlasting covenant whereby God obligates himself to watch over it, and lead it through every portion of its existence. Oh! how you should labor and pray, and watch and live, that you may deposite your child, *while even an infant*, in this sure place; God will then watch over it, and you need not fear what men or devils can do unto it.

But though God will surely watch over your child, and lead it through this critical period, and cause its light to shine clearly forth, if indeed it is a child of his, *you* are not, thereby, relieved of responsibilities; for it is an established law that God works, not by superseding, but through the agency of human exertions; and moreover, until the full developement is manifest, you cannot be certain that your child *is* already a child of his grace. The assurance, if you could possess it, of God's grace actually imparted to your child, might legitimately afford you comfort in the *midst* of your efforts, but by no means any *exemption from their burden*. These efforts should be diligently made. A brief mention of some of the more prominent ones will be here attempted.

YOU SHOULD, CONTINUALLY, FROM THEIR EARLIEST YEARS, SPEAK TO YOUR CHILDREN OF GOD. How can they love him unless they know him? And how can they know him unless they are taught concerning him? Surely the light of nature will not do more for *their* eyes than it has done for the eyes of the heathen who know not God. If you would train their affections and obedience for one higher than yourself, you must teach them of him who is the great end of their existence, from the very opening of their infant understand-

ings. You are not to wait till they can comprehend God—for no angel can attain to this; you are not to wait till they can apprehend the logical argument by which God is proved to exist; but you are to repose the existence of the great God among the very elementary truths of their education. Long before the child can have any ripened apprehensions of his existence and attributes, it can have its *thoughts*, and can revolve them in its infant way.

And your children can be interested in these things, earlier than perhaps you are aware. You can talk to them about some absent grand-parent whom, though they have never seen, they begin to love. And can you not talk to them about that dear Father in heaven, who is greater and better than this good father on earth? And can you not show them the stars that he made, and the beautiful grass he causes to grow, and the flowers that blow so sweetly? And can you not tell them of that little brother or sister, or parent who has gone to be with God? *Why can you not make these some of the most frequent and pleasing topics of conversation with little children?* Can you not tell them that when you lie in the grave that God will be their dear Father, and he will love them? And when your child offends you, and you are

forced to look displeased, and its little heart begins to break, why can you not stoop and tell it that the dear Father in heaven is grieved too, and that he feels as you feel?

Thus you may cause thoughts of God to be introduced very early and very pleasantly into the mind of the child; and nothing is more true than that you cannot acquaint it too early with the character, the claims, and the loveliness of that Being whom you aim to establish as the great and ultimate object of its affections. As it grows older, you can talk still farther of those things which are calculated to unfold to its mind the holiness and loveliness of God; teaching it to feel towards the Father that is *unseen*, just as you teach it to feel toward yourself. And while this course is pursued, the intellectual as well as the moral training of the child is best secured, and its mind is led into early and easy contact with subjects of an infinitely higher order than those which, too generally and exclusively, compose the topics of the nursery.

YOU SHOULD AIM TO RENDER RELIGIOUS TOPICS PLEASING AND ATTRACTIVE. True, the heart of the child is depraved, but much may be done to obviate the full difficulties arising thence. There is such an error—and one too often committed

by the most devoted parents—as rendering religion irksome to their children, by indiscreet modes and seasons of address. There is an impatient, anxious, fault-finding tone which is too often adopted, instead of that pleasant, natural, cheerful way in which the great matters of religion are more appropriately and usefully presented.

Surely there are no more delightful themes than those afforded by the history and work of redemption; there are none that are in themselves so attractive; they hold heaven in wonder and in praise; and if, with our meditation and conversation on these topics we mingled more—not of the *admitted*, but—of the *commanded* joy of the apostle, we should see that through all our social relations, the power of our religion would be vastly invigorated. In winning, social aspects should religion be presented daily in our families—not as a thing of constraint, but as the spontaniety of our spirits. Our conduct, our words, our *prayers* should always thus commend it.

But in order thus to speak of, and present religion, it is indispensable that parents thus *view it*—thus *feel it*. Here is the too common, withering error. Their own religion is too legal, and as such produces its corresponding, forbidding impression. If the heart is full of love, and that love

is daily fed at the cross, and by the promises, there is a soft and summer atmosphere about the man, in the genial influences of which, all around him delight to dwell. Thus we come back to the fundamental requisite in the family—that the parents be—not merely christians—but living, loving, cheerful christians, of chastened, heavenly tempers. Reader, is this your character? The highest welfare of your children pleads for its possession and maintenance.

YOU SHOULD BRING YOUR CHILDREN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALL THE STATED MEANS OF GRACE, AND ORDINANCES OF GOD. God will not honor those who will not honor him and his established ordinances. It is in the way of their observance that he dispenses usual blessings.

Under this direction may be included all the means of religious instruction. It is lawful and wise to adopt every expedient which promises to augment the influence of divine truth over youthful minds; *but those which God has established are never to be slighted.* Among this latter class stands, first in order and importance, *religious instruction in the family.* By this is signified something else than that pleasant speaking of God, and winning manifestation of religion which has been already enjoined; it refers to stated, systematic

teaching in divine things. If the family holds the high place assigned it as a religious institution, there surely should be, on that day which is solemnly consecrated to the highest religious purposes, a season devoted to this work. Is the church, which is but a larger family, to enjoy her services, and instruction, and worship; and shall not the lesser, the primary families, have their's also? Is there a hallowed association, powerful for good, connected with the solemn sanctuary; and shall not our children have some corresponding associations with the sober services of their houses, the lesser sanctuaries? The time and the place of such solemn convenings hold an incalculable influence over little spirits. The instructions, at such times, should be adapted to the various ages and dispositions, and be so conducted, according to the discretion of each parent, as to minister to the highest degree of usefulness and interest.

It will be distinctly recognised by the reader, that for this *family religious instruction* is claimed the high authority of a divine ordinance. The neglect of this ordinance is a fruitful source of the prevalent ungodliness of the rising race. It was observed in the earlier days of our country, and many christian parents have grown up under its influence to be what they are, while they neglect to confer the like benefit upon their children.

The preaching of the word, and the appropriate public assemblings of his people for worship, are other means of grace established by God, under the influence of which your children should be faithfully educated. And here I would have it noticed that the church, as a larger family, is composed of the lesser ones. Hence it appears that families should be found together in the house of God. The indifference which is too often manifested on this subject, and the license which is given to the roving dispositions of the young, cannot be too severely reprehended. It is a plain part of God's ordinance that households be found *united* in his public, as well as in his family worship. And it seems as appropriate that the child should prefer a different dwelling from his father's, and be humoured in the whim, as that he should prefer and be allowed to wander from his appropriate seat in the sanctuary.

There are other means of useful instruction in deserved repute, which, though they cannot plead direct divine authority, may be used with profit in the religious culture of the child. The *Sabbath school* is such an institution. There the child may go to hear the instructions of home corroborated and enforced by others. It has the heart of a pious instructor enlisted to pray for its sanctifica-

tion. Thus intercession is increased in its behalf; it becomes the object of united prayers and of united counsels; it is led to look upon religion as claiming the attention of other children as well as its own; its mind becomes furnished with still additional stores of sanctifying truth, and finds public influences uniting with the private ones, to impress the importance of eternal things, and of salvation by Christ. The probabilities of its sanctification thereby become increased, and the hope is strengthened that it may stand among the first fruits which the Spirit, in a time of awakening, so plentifully gathers from pious families, and faithfully instructed Sabbath schools.

But above all things else, while presenting these more public instrumentalities, let not the pre-eminence of household instruction be forgotten—let it not be overlooked, that these public means, whether of divine or human origin, are to be valued as *auxiliaries* to the family institution. They are not the *chief* instrumentalities in the hopeful culture of the young. These reside at *home*, and parents should be mindful that their responsibilities cannot be shifted upon the Sanctuary and the Sabbath school.

YOU SHOULD SET BEFORE YOUR CHILDREN A HOLY EXAMPLE. If they love you, their tastes, and all

their notions of excellence will correspond with the traits of your character. Thus it is of the highest importance that, while you win their devoted affections, you present them, in your own self, with a model of holiness. Every blemish upon your character—every excellence that you lack, has a power to mislead your children, which is proportionate to the love they bear you. There is no view that is calculated so tenderly to press upon unregenerated hearts the necessity of personal, consistent piety; and there is no view, but that of the Saviour, that is more powerful with believing parents, to excite them to live near to God.

How can you expect your children to LOVE and OBEY God, unless they see by your conduct that you yield him obedience and love? They quickly learn to understand his commands, and they shrewdly discern the amount of your reverence for them. And if they find that those who are their *models* have no conscientiousness toward God, how can you expect *them* to revere his laws?

How can you expect them to PRAY to God, unless they see you pray, and thus confess your dependence, going to him for all things? If you would teach them to pray, and to be chiefly mindful of God and unseen and eternal things, there must be something—some arrangement holding a *promi-*

ment place amid your household, calculated continually to cultivate these spiritual habits. Precepts will effect but little. Let them see that *you* are ever mindful of God, and of the great end of your spiritual existence—that you are thus mindful when you first wake from slumber, and when you lie down at eventide. Let them see that God is so prominent in your thoughts, that you cannot undertake the duties of the day without his blessing, nor rest in quiet at night without a committal of yourself and your beloved household to his kindness and care. Let them *see* that while *they* are *your* children, you acknowledge *yourself to be a child of a greater Father*, and kneel down with affection, and simplicity, and sincerity, to pour out your soul before him. Let your language in these exercises be simple, and your words few, that your children may neither be weary, or entirely uninstructed. O what a place and a posture is this for the parent, *by solemn illustration*, to teach his family the beauty of penitence for wrongs committed, and the delights of chastened love and obedience!

Secret prayer does not subserve the desired end. It is witnessed only by the eye, and it enters only into the ear, of God. Household worship is the needed arrangement. If you are so

little mindful of God, as to go easily and carelessly, day after day, to your employment, without prayer; if you appear before your children to think but seldom or never of God, how can you expect *them* to be mindful of him, when they look to your example for their highest law? If you are *careless* about their souls—if you have no *desire* that they should grow up in habits of heavenly-mindedness and prayer—if you are willing to abandon them to the unrestrained irruptions of worldliness, with all its sad temptations—if you are willing, by neglecting the greatest safeguards in this moral wilderness, to *jeopardize their eternal interests, after you have given them being*—then you may neglect the family altar, and banish all social acts of prayer from your doors.

But God will not hold you guiltless of your children's sins! Neither will your own conscience, in case your children grow up without religion, and meet a dreadful end, escape the awful compunction, at some future period, that by your *example* they were betrayed into the ways of destruction!

But do you ask for the scripture warrant for this duty? You may as well ask for a scripture warrant to be honest, or a scripture warrant to be prayerful. If the whole design of the family ex-

hibits its religious character—if the scriptures evidently contemplate it as a religious institution, then these facts afford warrant enough for the duty—a warrant derived from the evident truth, that the object of the family can never be efficiently advanced where the duty of household prayer is neglected.

But let us recur to the heavenly model. How does God govern us as a greater family? What signify assemblings in the sanctuary, after divine appointment? What mean those institutions of prayer, and praise, and instruction, in the observance of which, communities are assembled? Are not these the means which God, as our great Father, has instituted for the spiritual and proper ordering of the great family of man? And, ye fathers, are not you the appointed heads of lesser families? And if God has established altars for the public assemblies of men; if he institutes and enjoins public religious instruction and prayer, for the right ordering of his great family; if he bases all their order and happiness and security, as he evidently does, upon the maintenance of these institutions, what plea have you left for the omission of corresponding instrumentalities in your own lesser households? Here—from the heavenly model—is derived a warrant plain enough, and

broad enough for the sanction and authority of all branches of family religious instruction.

But, in the connection in which this subject has been introduced, the duty was first considered as a *necessary part of parental example*, and as such, it is hoped that it commends itself to every reflecting conscience.

EXAMPLE is a mighty instrumentality—the most potent instructor. What God is—heaven is; and what the parent is—that may the family be expected to be. An evil or even a deficient example here, may prove a curse which nothing but the grace of God can avert: whereas, a devout, prayerful, holy example, is that instrumentality, which God has expressed, both by his word and dealings, an abundant readiness to bless.

Pages might be easily and appropriately added here, on the importance of *guarding against the evil influences of a wicked world*, which, notwithstanding all parental diligence, tend to seduce the heart from God. The truth is one of awakening import—that our children are to be educated, if possible, in the exercise of feelings, thoughts and habits entirely different from those with which the world is full, and with which they must daily meet? We not only have good influences to secure in that domestic circle which—God be prais-

ed—is a place we *can control*; but we have an army of evil influences to resist—an army opening, on every hand, their devouring mouths to consume our offspring. Oh how many parents have trembled and wept and prayed, as they have been obliged to send forth their little lambs from the domestic fold, amid these ravening wolves! Many hearts have ached, and many hairs have hastened to be gray, as the dubious progress, or the sad downfalls of these little ones have been painfully and anxiously watched.

But we pass this subject which is too fruitful for discussion, to give one more direction to those who make it their chief aim to guide the affections of their children to God; viz.,

CULTIVATE A DEEP SENSE OF THE NEED OF THE SUPERADDED GRACE OF GOD. All other means are of no avail without this. They can only prepare the way and mark out the channel of grace. It is this sense of the absolute necessity of God's supervision and grace, which should drive the parent often to the throne of mercy. It is this feeling which, more than any other one thing, promises good to your households; it awakens to fidelity in every other duty, and prevails mightily with God.

Your instructions—your admonitions—your

love—your watchfulness, while they may do much in the work of outward restraint and moral culture, can never change the heart, or, unaided, guide its affections up to God. It is God—in whose hands are the hearts of kings—and God *alone*, who can summon the affections to himself and new-create the soul. The power is with him; that, while you labor and watch as he ordains, you should also lie low at the footstool of his grace.

Thus have been enumerated some of the more prominent instrumentalities, in the employment of which, parents may hopefully look for the full development of their children's piety. It will be seen that those which are the most important lie within the sphere of the family, so that no parent can plead any excuse for their neglect. All things there are under your control, and there you are to be faithful; you are absolute, both by the laws of God and man; the "stranger," even, "that is within thy gates" is subject, while there, to your statutes. Adults, as well as children are to obey you there; so that your responsibility for all its arrangements and influences, and for all that comes from it, is great and solemn.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAMILY COVENANT.

SOME may ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and be inclined to sink in view of duties so momentous and arduous. But there is a brighter side; there are encouragements and promises proportionate to the magnitude of the work; and if a sense of dependence pervades the parental heart, there is a sure staff on which that dependence may rest. The family is no less a sphere of *joy*, than of *responsibility*; abundant hopes may lawfully predominate over its anxieties. For it is true in this sphere, that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be," and the voice of the Saviour may be heard in the reviving assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

When man was created *in holiness*, the family relation was established. It was needed *then*, with all its wise and wonderful adaptations. Surely it

cannot be of less importance since the fall. And if the plan of redemption is *remedial*—as it strictly is—it surely will be found to operate through the original institutions, re-establishing and confirming *them*, while it ordains whatever new institutions may be necessary for our fallen state. It will surely accord, then, with all our pre-conceptions, that we find this precious sanctuary—home—recognized in the economy of grace—its foundations secured, and its dilapidated walls rebuilt.

It is the object of this chapter to show that there is a special covenant of grace established, on the part of God, with his spiritual people, in behalf of their children; so that conscientious parents may be encouraged by the assurance of God's gracious co-operation and blessing.

By a covenant, as the term will be used in these pages, is understood an agreement requiring the action of two parties, whereby they come under mutual obligations to perform specified duties. Such an agreement remains binding until it either expires by its own limitation, or is infringed by the unfaithfulness of either party.

It can be made to appear from the Word of God, that he proffers special promises, not only to the *persons* of those who believe on the name of

Christ, but also to their children, provided the parents are found faithful in their various duties to God and to their households. By the proffer of these promises, God, on his part, tenders the covenant, which man, by believing and obeying, ratifies. It then becomes an "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." There is a manifest distinction between the part of the covenant which consists in the proffer that God makes, and that part which depends upon man's compliance and ratification. All that is proposed to be shown, is that God makes his proffer to all who will believe and obey; viz., that he will be a God, not only to them, but to their children after them. The fidelity of man to his part of the transaction will be hereafter noticed.

The original promise of God was to Abraham, whose God, and the God of whose seed he pledged himself to be. See Gen. chap. xvii. This promise did not so much concern Abraham's personal acceptance, for this was all settled previously. He had been called of God, as recorded in Gen. xii. 1.; he had exercised personal faith, and it was "counted unto him for righteousness." Gen. xv. 6. But this was a more definite promise, of which he had received previous intimations, in behalf of his children—a promise to which he was en-

titled only as a believer in God ; but still one, in a measure distinct from, though connected with that whereby his personal acceptance was secured.

The import of the promise is comprehended in the words, "I will be their God." He promises to be their God in the same sense in which he was Abraham's God ; thus, while he pledged an earthly inheritance, the promise, in its higher sense, concerned spiritual favors.

The conditions, by the observance of which Abraham was to ratify the covenant, were two-fold—spiritual and ceremonial. The *spiritual* condition was, Gen. xvii. 1, "walk before me and be thou perfect;" and the actual entail of the covenant involved also the righteous walk of his seed; see verse 9. The *ceremonial* condition was the rite of circumcision which is instituted in the after part of the chapter.

God, then, promised to confer the same spiritual blessings upon the seed of Abraham *forever*, which he had conferred on the person of Abraham, provided he, and his seed after him, would ratify this covenant, by a close and upright walk with God, and by the faithful administration of that prescribed outward rite which was to be the public, ceremonial recognition of the covenant. Thus there was established, beyond question, in the case

of the Jewish people, a marked connection between the obedience and fidelity of the parents, and the spiritual prosperity of their offspring.

This whole matter is farther and amply illustrated in all the subsequent portions of the Old Testament.

When the children of Israel began first to be recognized as a nation, and God, according to his promise, appeared for their deliverance, he renews this promise, telling them by the mouth of his servant Moses, "Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, &c., * * which I command thee this day, *that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee.*" Deut. iv. 40. See also Deut. vii. 12, 13. The following is a remarkably explicit comment on the import of the covenant,—“O that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always, *that it might be well with them and their children forever.*” Deut. v. 29. Here the promise and its conditions are plainly implied. For a like passage, see Deut. xii. 25. The whole of Deut. xxx. is occupied with precious promises to the Israelites and *their seed after them*, if they would but continue to serve the Lord. In case of departures and subsequent penitence, God promises to renew his covenant with them, *and their children.*

But a volume might be occupied in exhibiting the Old Testament representations on this subject. We must dismiss the prosecution of this work by referring the reader to the following, among a large class of passages: Prov. xi. 21: xx. 7. Psalm xxxvii. 25.

All who are familiar with the Old Testament, know that it abounds with special promises and injunctions, such as have been quoted, and will readily assent to the fact, that peculiar and precious promises are therein proffered to the seed of Abraham, *and that the fulfillment of those promises is closely associated with the personal obedience of parents and their faithful instruction of their children.*

But though these promises were originally made to Abraham, it is, of them, that we Gentiles, if believers in Jesus, under the christian dispensation, have become heirs. So that the very same offer of household blessings is now made by God to all who believe on the name of his Son. This is evident from various considerations.

It comports with the language of the original promise—"in thee shall ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED." These words unfold a design more comprehensive, in its ultimate limits, than the bounds of any nation. They show that

Abraham was the chosen and honored medium of communicating spiritual blessings, not only unto his lineal descendants, but unto all the nations of the earth.

It accords with the practices of the Jews. Individuals of other nations, upon renouncing idolatry and taking upon themselves the name of the Lord, were admitted to the privileges of the Jewish people. They and their children, becoming entitled to Jewish privileges, as though lineal descendants of Abraham, show that the blessings of the covenant, in the judgment of the Jews, were not exclusively confined to the native-born of their nation. And these authorized practices were a manifestation, through every successive age of their peculiar privileges, that God had ultimate respect, in the covenant he had established with them, to all the families of the earth.

It was a matter of prophecy, that the Gentiles should become full partakers of all the covenant privileges. If any reader is not familiar with this fact, it is sufficient to refer him to the following chapters of Isaiah, viz., xlix., liv., lv., lx., lxi., lxii., lxv., lxvi.

The New Testament abundantly confirms the title of the believing Gentiles to all the covenant promises of the Jews; so far as those promises

concerned spiritual things. Here the prophecies of Isaiah and others are found to meet with their fulfillment. The Apostle Peter, in his address on the day of Pentecost, says, "For the promise is unto you and to your children," and then adds, "and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The special promise in behalf of children is recognized as belonging equally to the Gentiles, by the vision of the centurion, wherein he was told that Peter should instruct him in that whereby he and all his house should be saved. Acts xi. 14. See also the offer of Paul to the jailer—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" Acts xvi. 31.

But consider this same Apostle's reasoning in the third chapter of his epistle to the Galatians. "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." What can be plainer than this? He continues, "So then they which be of faith, *are blessed with faithful Abraham.*" Verses 7, 8, 9. In verses 13 and 14 it is added, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, * * * * * that the

blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.”

In the subsequent part of the chapter, the Apostle seems to vary the argument. Presenting Christ as a lineal descendant of Abraham, he asserts the nearness of believers with him, and concludes as follows, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

In like manner it is as frequently and gloriously asserted, that, in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek—circumcision or uncircumcision—bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all. What could more unequivocally proclaim a community of interest and privilege, under the Gospel dispensation, between all classes of men? The Jew and the Gentile are on the same footing. And this is not brought about by *reducing* the Jew to the level of the Gentile—for this would manifestly make the privileges of the *new*, less than the privileges of the *old* dispensation; but it is effected through that glorious One, who is, by pre-eminence, *the* seed of Abraham, and in whom all the families of the earth are admitted to the same blessings. Thus Jesus Christ, uniting, as he does, all nations and kindreds into one—giving them one new and common and everlasting name—becomes the glo-

rious key-stone of the arch of divine grace,—the One on whom all human hopes depend, and by whom all the tribes of men are bound together in the joyful bonds of a spiritual and everlasting brotherhood !

To suppose that believers in Christ are not possessors of the promise made to Abraham concerning his seed, *involves the manifest error that the privileges of the christian dispensation are less than those of the one that has passed.* This is contrary to all the declarations of God, and the universal belief of his people. Still, unless it is maintained, as cannot be, that the promises to Abraham's seed were only of temporal and national, and contemplate no spiritual blessings—then follows the manifest absurdity alluded to above. Are the spiritual promises of this dispensation abridged? Did the Jews possess *one* that we do not now have in a more glorious manner?

It cannot be doubted that the church of Christ, with all its covenants and promises, is essentially the same, both subsequent and previous to his personal appearance and atonement for sin.

It is allowable, therefore, to bid parents to read and receive as theirs, all the promises which are so thickly scattered throughout the Old Testament, of God's blessing upon the seed of his faith-

ful children—that he will show mercy unto thousands of such as fear him—and that he will establish his covenant with the pious and their seed, and their seed's seed, from generation to generation. But when they read, let them fail not to be incited thereby to more and more fidelity in the culture of every grace, and in the discharge of every duty which may commend them, through Christ, to the favor of that God, whose favor is life.

Be encouraged, christian parent, in view of the precious promises. Search them out, study them, lay hold of them by faith, and when you feel your need of grace to aid you in the discharge of parental responsibilities, remember that there is a fountain of grace opened for your *children*, as well as for your own soul.

It is proper to say a word here of the seal of this covenant, which is established under the Christian dispensation ; viz., INFANT BAPTISM.

It is conceded, on all hands, that circumcision was the public ceremonial seal of the original covenant. As we have become heirs of the same covenant, we are also obligated to employ its seal. It was, and is, one of the steps necessary to the full ratification of the covenant, and should never be neglected by those who are anxious to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.

We must employ the *same* seal, unless we have evidence of its form being changed.

The seal has been changed, and is now appropriately administered by the application of water to infants, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

1. Circumcision was abolished ; as appears from the frequent declarations, that in Christ there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision ; and also from the account contained in Acts, ch. xv.

2. There was a propriety in a change being effected. The Old Testament was written in *blood* to teach the great need of the shedding of blood for the remission of sins. Now that Christ has appeared and fulfilled the law, there is no call for such a type. It partook also of the nature of a *national* mark, the necessity of which was done away, when the wall between the Jews and Gentiles was broken down : from which time its spiritual signification was appropriately, under a more gracious dispensation, transferred to a milder ordinance.

3. The ordinance of Baptism was enjoined by Christ, as the initiating ordinance : "Go ye into all the world," &c.

4. Children of believers under the present, as under the former dispensation, being in covenant

favor, are entitled to the seal, which was actually set, by the Apostles, in the administration of the ordinance of infant baptism. See Acts xvi. 15 and 33. I. Cor. i. 16. In these verses, the word rendered "household" is rendered, in one of the early versions, (Syriac) "children."

Infant Baptism, therefore, as appears from the above brief considerations, is the ordinance which should be employed, by all believers who are heads of families. But perhaps we hear the voice of an objector already interposing, and questioning the obligation of any *forms* under the Christian dispensation.

It is readily conceded, that the present is pre-eminently a spiritual dispensation. It is not composed of, neither does much of its efficacy consist in, such like ceremonies as were essential to the ancient service, and as were enjoined by its cumbersome ritual. But still, that all public and formal acknowledgements of God, by his people, are abrogated, is incorrect. The Sabbath and the services of the sanctuary still remain, as instituted means, whereby God is to be held in remembrance. The observances of the Christian dispensation are not burdensome; Baptism and the Lord's Supper being the only ones that partake much of the semblance of ceremonies.

But, asks the objector, why cannot I remember the death of Jesus Christ, and commune with him in spirit, without this external observance? And why cannot I believe in the covenant promise to my children, and acknowledge it before God, without the administration of any external rite?

It is enough to answer, that God has ordered these observances. There are two great acts of God's grace through Jesus Christ: one is seen in the covenant made with his people regarding their own personal salvation; and the other is manifest in the covenant made in behalf of their children. These are the great, distinguishing, glorious acts of God's grace;—acts, the fruits and the contemplation of which will fill heaven with praises! Now it is, with a proper regard to his own glory, that God requires his people to acknowledge,—not in private, merely, but in public, and by some simple method of his own wise ordaining,—these distinguishing acts of his grace. Thus, by the Lord's Supper, all his people *publicly* ascribe the glory of their salvation unto the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world: and, in like manner, the baptism of infants is a public and highly appropriate recognition by the parents, and before the world, of that other great act of God's grace, whereby he promises to be a

God unto their children. The children of God's faithful people, collectively viewed, are followed with special temporal and spiritual prosperity. It is proper, therefore, lest such a manifest result should be ascribed to human agency, that christian parents should be called on publicly to acknowledge that, wherein their offspring may differ from others in piety, all is to be ascribed to the grace of God. And when we consider the use of the ordinance, in its power to impress parental obligation, to awaken the most tender emotions, and to excite, at the most hopeful season, parental watchfulness and effort, we find that the objection to infant baptism, as a needless or indifferent ceremony, is utterly set aside.

Of infants, the children of believers are the only proper subjects of baptism. Baptism is the seal of a covenant. Of what covenant? Of the covenant made with the children of Abraham, in behalf of their children. But who are the children of Abraham? "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." What title, then, have those who are neither "Christ's," nor "of faith," to offer themselves as "heirs of the promise?" God has given them no promise. With

tenderness and sorrow be it said, unbelieving parents, you have no promises—no covenants for yourselves or your households. You are living where—for aught God has promised you to the contrary—devouring influences may feed upon you and your children, and calamities, without alleviation, may befall you. O why will ye dwell in the howling wilderness? Shall the Saviour say of you also, as he looks on the coming destruction of yourselves and families, “How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!”

CHAPTER XII.

THE FAMILY COVENANT.

(CONTINUED.)

THERE remain some inquiries still to be prosecuted, concerning the definiteness of this covenant. Is it positive—definite—absolute: or is it, on the other hand, a mere assurance of a general connection between parental obedience and fidelity, and the spiritual prosperity of the offspring? The former view is the one which the author feels constrained to adopt and advocate; viz., that the covenant is definite and absolute. The idea intended to be conveyed by this language is, that—instead of a general promise that, in most, or many cases, parental fidelity will be smiled upon and succeeded—the promise is, that upon all the children of his people, his converting and sanctifying spirit shall be poured out—*provided*, the parents walk before him and are perfect, observing and per-

forming all their duties toward God and their households. Lest some should be surprised at this statement, it may be well to insert in this place that passage quoted in the preceding chapter : "O that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me and KEEP ALL MY COMMANDMENTS ALWAYS, that it might be well with them and THEIR CHILDREN FOREVER."—Deut. v. 29. Many of God's "commandments," it will be remembered, concern the government of the household.

DEFINITENESS OF PROMISES AND CONDITIONS IS ESSENTIAL TO THE VERY IDEA OF A COVENANT. God, by becoming a party in a covenant with man, does not *abridge* his sovereignty, considered as an attribute. The covenant originates in it, and is merely a pledge that, on certain conditions, God will ever act in a stipulated way. Still, in one sense, a covenant may be said to *limit the action* of God's sovereignty. We will not say that God *can* not—but, that he *will* not act in any other than the stipulated way. And here is the value of a covenant promise ; it is God's word, to which, when we comply with the proffered conditions, we bind him. It stands fast, for he cannot lie. In a covenant, then, Divine sovereignty pledges itself. It assumes a cognizable form ; it is rendered definite, and changes not. Therefore, to say that God has established a covenant which he will

observe in the generality of instances, is to deprive his word of all stability, and is manifestly absurd.

Suppose that we interpret the personal covenant of grace, made with those who believe, as of a general, and not of an absolute and definite character; with regard to the fulfilling of which God is at liberty to act as a sovereign in every case. Would it be any covenant at all? How should I know whether he would *accept*, or *except* me on such conditions? It would avail nothing to my quiet as a poor, conscience-stricken sinner, to know that, as a *general* thing, God would accept all who come unto him through Jesus Christ. I wish to know what is his *fixed, definite, universal* rule of conduct, ere my soul can find any rest. It is only when I find that, by a sure promise, he has graciously pledged his sovereignty, and assured me that he will *always* act in a given way, upon given conditions, that I find ground on which I can rest my aching soul; it is then only that I find the long sought shelter of a sure and eternal covenant.

A like pledging of sovereignty is implied in all promises and covenants, and is essential to their very nature; so that every covenant must be definite. It can have nothing to do with ge-

neralities. And hence, if we suppose the covenant made with pious parents to be *general*—as proffering blessings which, in most cases, will be granted, and may be in others withheld, we rob it of that which constitutes the value and essence of any covenant—we leave the *name*, and remove the *thing*. In contending, then, for the definiteness of the covenant under consideration, we are but contending for its *vitality*.

THERE IS NOTHING INDEFINITE IN THE TERMS OF THE ORIGINAL COVENANT. The promise to Abraham was, to be a God to him and *to his seed*. There is nothing here about a *portion* of his seed, or the *generality* of his seed, or that between parental fidelity and filial piety, he would establish a *general* connection. The terms employed are, like the terms of all God's covenants and promises, plain, definite, absolute, and decisive.

We are to regard, therefore, this covenant as proffered alike unto all believers, and unto all their children. It is as equally applicable, in the terms of its proposition, to one as to another—to the whole, as to a part. God promises unto all parents who will *keep all his commandments always*, that it *shall be well with them and their children forever!*

THE SUITABLENESS OF SUCH A COVENANT TO OUR

NATURAL, STRONG, AND UNCHANGING DESIRES FOR OUR CHILDREN'S GOOD, IS AN ARGUMENT IN ITS FAVOR. Such desires are in the bosom of every parent, and they are felt, equally, with regard to every child. And so closely are we bound to those who are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that *full value* would scarcely seem to be given to the scheme of salvation, unless it embraced our households, also, in its sure, unfailing covenants.

Look at the famished mother whose little children are gathering around her, and pleading, in vain, for bread. Her *own* body faints with hunger; but that is nothing to the aching of her heart under the cries of her babes. See a man approaching with a half loaf for her relief. Hear him tender it on the condition that *she* will eat it, for *her* life is valuable, and it is not sufficient for them all. How almost valueless the offer! Her children cannot share it!

God forbid that I should say the offer of personal salvation would be almost valueless, if it were not associated with the family covenant; but this I may say, that the connection of the latter with the former does enhance, beyond measure, the value of redemption. Our children are provided for, and we may say to others, as Paul to the jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,

and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." We can go with the full blessing,—with balm for every wound.

But, it may be said, this partakes more of feeling than argument; that we cannot reason from the fact that such an arrangement would please us, that therefore it is so. True—but still it is safe to reason that God has as truly made provision, in the kingdom of his grace, for those right desires which he has implanted; as he has, in the kingdom of nature, for our natural wants. While we cannot reason from depraved, we may reason from correct desires. And there is a fitness in the belief that the whole economy of grace is nicely adjusted to the wants of our spiritual and social natures.

Who has reared the family institution, and constituted all its endearing relations—was it not God? Who has woven these tender ties; and whose eternal fingers have bound around us these silken cords of household love? Is not the answer,—God? Who has so bound the parent to the child that in order to the full enjoyment of any blessing by the former, it must be shared with his children? Was it not God?

These feelings and all their proper, outgrowing desires, God has implanted, and from their indica-

tion we may safely reason. He has not made us to thirst, without causing the earth to gush forth with springs; nor to hunger, without causing it to teem with plenty; nor to be weary, without providing "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." And has he implanted within us these higher emotions, without providing for them in the economy of his grace!

On no other supposition than the one advocated, can we understand why an abundance of children is so frequently promised, as a blessing, to God's people. Such was the promise to Abraham; and such were made, frequently, to the children of Israel. But is it a blessing to bring forth children unto eternal death? Can such an increase be promised by God as a blessing, unless at the same time he has made sure provision for their good? Such a provision we believe he has made, instrumentally, and every generation of parents may know that if they will keep all the commandments of God always, it will be well with their children forever.

God multiplies the generations of the righteous, because he knows that they, like Abraham, will command their households after them. And he cuts off the generations of the wicked.

As the covenant has been understood, in this

discussion, its establishment depends on the fidelity of the parent in keeping the commands of God.

Some of these commands are that they live near to God, and grow in grace—that they set holy examples—offer earnest intercessions—that they apply the seal of the covenant to their children—that they instruct them in righteousness, and lead lives of obedience and devotedness to God.

But where is the parent who keeps all these commandments always? God makes the proffer of the covenant, but where is the parent that can plead his own fulfillment of the prescribed conditions? Thus the covenant is never fully ratified.

Do you ask, then, why exhibit it? It is manifest, in all God's dealings, that he stoops to our infirmities. He does not cast us off for our frailties. And in nothing is this more manifest than in the fact, that, though we hold him not to his gracious covenant, still he does wonderfully proportion his blessings to our approximations to duty. Here, then, while, through our sin, we are left without a claim, we have still precious encouragement. Look, ye parents, and rejoice. Be excited by the view that has been presented,—by the whole, corroborating history of pious families, to draw nigh unto God. For your own sakes, and for your children's sakes, purge away

your sins, and aim after higher and higher holiness. Thus the blessing of the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob will rest upon you and your seed after you!

There is a habit, however, sometimes prevalent, but which cannot be too pointedly rebuked, of judging, from the character of the children, of the spiritual character of the parents. We are not thus to judge one another. Noah had wicked children, and David had an Absalom; but who shall, therefore, sit in judgment on them? If we are dealt with according to our deserts, we shall share in like afflictions; and if we infer, from our comparative mercies, that we are more deserving, we are but one short step behind the Pharisee, who, in open language, said, "Lord I thank thee that I am not as other men are." God may see that, of two equally faithful parents, one, because of some special sin or infirmity, needs, in mercy, such a recompense more than another. These things, with their reasons, are all with God. And while we may rightly hold the general doctrine inculcated above, we should ever bear in mind, when we contemplate individual instances, the Saviour's admonition, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE topics that have been discussed in this little volume, have had almost exclusive reference to the relation between the immortal soul and God. There is another class of relations which we all hold to our fellow creatures. These, also, lie in the sphere of religious and moral culture. They form a distinct, though co-ordinate portion of our duties, and are capable of being exhibited in a like manner. The view which has been taken of the Family as a Religious Institution, and of Heaven as its Model, affords equal facilities for the illustration of these duties, and of the principles which parents should adopt in inculcating them. In the family, the little child is usually surrounded with its fellow creatures, near it in point of age, possessing equality of rights, and bound to it by endearing ties. So that while, in

its relation to the parent, there is an embryo of its relation to God, in a higher sphere; there is, also, in its relation to its fellows, an embryo of its future relations in the community, and in the universe. But this interesting and extensive subject must be waived, and commended to the reflections of the reader.

And, now, in closing these pages, the author would beseech those to whom they are more especially addressed, solemnly to ponder their responsibilities. Review, in thought, some of the considerations which have been suggested.

You have been told that the entire responsibility of your children's education is cast upon you. God has done this. He has placed them upon *your* knee; he has caused them to gather around *your* fireside; he has made them the inmates of *your* parlors and chambers. They look to you for protection in infancy, for care in childhood, and for fidelity in riper years. They seek, at your hand, the supply of their daily wants; they watch your example, with childlike simplicity and shrewdness, for the lessons of their own conduct, and they hang upon every word of your lips for instruction. And while God has placed them in this relation to you, in order to give the tender

ones every possible security for the wise promotion of their good, he has bound them to your *heart*—he has made them the fondest objects of your love. He has not intrusted them to you as to a *servant*, but as to a *Father* and a *Mother*, and has given them the power of exerting every artifice upon your affections. He has made the happiness of the domestic circle to consist as a whole. The misery of one is, measurably, the misery of all; and thus it is, he has wedded parental fidelity and parental happiness, giving to the child, as the security of its faithful education, every prompting of parental affection and parental interest. How fitly is this all devised!

In this measure, God has given you power over your child. What is there that you cannot do for it? Whither is it not in your power to turn its infantile thoughts and affections? With what expectancy may you not rear it? For what business may you not train it? To what religion may you not convert it? To what real or false church may you not attach its affections? You can teach it to be a follower of Mahomet, or a worshipper of Vishnu, or a mere moralist after the school of a diluted christianity. You can rear it to despise all religion, and to sneer at eternal life as a fable, and at eternal death as a horrid superstition. In

fine, you can give whichever of these, or other characters, you choose, if so be you will shape, to the production of the intended end, your own example and precepts, and prostitute, to the same hellish purpose, all the hallowed influences of the domestic circle.

Your example is potent. Every affection tends to you as to its first known and most natural object, and every look is to your appearance and your conduct. You *do* teach, you cannot *help* teaching and inculcating what you *are*, more than you can hinder the sun from shining, or the fire from warming. The impress of your own character is made upon all around you.

As great as these responsibilities are, from them you can never be separate!

Contemplate, still farther, your absoluteness. No one can withstand you in the sphere of home. No one can enter there. No human influence, or combined influences can rival yours. "My father said it," or "My mother did it," is the all prevailing argument upon the *heart*, long after the tongue has ceased to lisp it. What a guarantee of *virtue* where the sayings and the doings are in the fear of God! What a seal of destruction where vice, or error, or negligence reigns! Who is there that lives to be so old as to divest himself entirely of

the remembered parental example? It is a legacy that remains, for good or ill, after riches are consumed, and the remembrance of later things fades away. So absolute is your control that good influences from abroad are of but little avail unless *seconded* at home—of *no* avail, if *discountenanced* at home.

There is no mere human influence that can compete with that of the parent. The preacher of the Gospel may rivet the attention and arouse the consciences of the little household, as he discourses from the commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”—and the parent may, by one worldly remark, or one worldly action, as he passes, with his fond family, from the house of God, change the impressed seriousness of an hour’s labor into levity, and the deep wrought fear into mirth. One oath from the parent may seemingly absolve his household from the obligation of the *third* commandment—one act of insubordination may do away the *fifth*—one angry passion, or meditated revenge, may undermine the *sixth*—one unchaste expression may break the fetters of the *seventh*—one act of fraud or shrewdness may render nugatory the *eighth*—one prevarication may destroy the *ninth*—one instance of covetousness may involve in common ruin the

tenth—while the whole tenor of parental example and domestic arrangements, making manifest that there is no fear of God, effects the demolition of that *first* command, on which hang the law and the prophets.

Thus the parents may easily, by a wicked or inconsiderate life before their children, throw down the altar and break the tables of stone, and set their households in eternal defiance to the influence and eloquence of the sanctuary! Who can stem this influence? Who can save the child, or modify essentially its character, when—even destitute of the *co-operation*—and, much more, when contending even with the *opposition* of Home!! No one but God can operate *against* you.

Forget not, beloved readers, if you are parents, that, as such, you are invested with a mighty influence, and that on you is reposed a weighty responsibility; that, as such, you are to rule for God, to make your own dwellings little sanctuaries, to employ your inalienable authority for righteousness; and that, as such, you have a precious covenant of grace proffering to you all needed aid. Look upward; be holy—be prayerful—be diligent.

I look above, into the sereneness of the starry sky, and think of the vast conjecture of the astro-

nomer, that every little star is a sun and centre of another system like our own, and that this infinitude of systems revolves around some greater centre which upholds and enlightens all ; and I seem to derive, from thence, an illustration of the apparent constitution of human society, every kingdom and nation, and, to descend still lower, every FAMILY of which is, in itself, a little system with its fixed centre,—all combining to make one great and glorious system, the centre of which is—GOD ; the light of which is—THE EFFULGENCE OF HIS ETERNAL GLORY. And as, in the natural world, the lesser suns are to receive their light and heat from the one that is greater and central,—so, in the moral, kings, and princes, and parents, and all in authority, are but to reflect, upon others, the light and influence which they derive from communion with God, and a faithful obedience to his commands. Alas ! how many families, their suns being set, go out in eternal darkness !

Remember your *accountability*. The day of final reckoning approaches, and you must meet your family in judgment !

And now,—that you may be found faithful, in that great day ; and that you may escape the awful condemnation of those whose very house-

holds, and whose dearest children testify against them,—may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, and your offspring, forever.