

THE DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

A CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

In a sermon "concerning family religion," preached by the celebrated Matthew Henry, at London, England, on Sunday, April 16, 1704, is found the following remarkable passage, which will be particularly interesting now that renewed attention is being directed to this important subject. After the usual introduction, the preacher proceeded thus:

The lesson then which I would recommend to you from this text ("With the church that is in their house," 1 Cor. 16:19), is this: That the families of Christians should be little churches, or thus, that wherever we have a house, God should have a church in it.

Unhappy contests there have been, and still are, among wise and good men about the constitution, order and government of churches. God by his grace heal these breaches; lead us into all truth and dispose our minds to love and peace; that while we endeavor here-in to walk according to the light God has given us, we may charitably believe that others do so, too; longing to be there where we shall all be of one mind.

But I am now speaking of churches concerning which there is no controversy. All agree that masters of families who profess religion, and the fear of God themselves, should, according to the talent they are intrusted with, maintain and keep up religion and the fear of God in their families, as those who must give account; and that families, as such, should contribute to the support of Christianity in a nation, whose honor and happiness it is to be a Christian nation. As nature makes families little kingdoms, so grace makes families little churches, and those were the primitive churches of the Old Testament, before men began to call upon the name of the Lord in solemn assemblies, and the sons of God came together to present themselves before him.

Not that I would have these family churches set up and kept up in competition with, much less in contradiction to, public religious assemblies, which ought always to have the preference: "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. 87:2), and so must we; and must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, under color of exhorting one another daily at home. Far be it from us to offer anything that may countenance the invading of the office of the ministry, or laying it in common, and the unsurpassing or superseding of the administration of sacraments. No, but these family churches—which are but figuratively so—must be erected and maintained in subordination to those more sacred and solemn establishments.

Let those who are setting out in the world then set up a church in their house at first, and not defer it. Plead not youth and bashfulness, if you have confidence enough to rule a family, I hope you have confidence enough to pray with a family.

Let those who have a church in their house, be very careful to adorn and beautify it in their conversation. If you pray in your families, and read the Scriptures, and sing psalms, and yet are passionate and forward with your relatives, quarrelsome and contentious with your neighbors, unjust and deceitful in your dealings, or allow yourselves in any other sinful way, you pull down with one hand what you build up with the other. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."

Are your houses on earth then God's houses? Are they dedicated to him, and employed for him? If so, be of good comfort, his home in heaven shall be yours shortly: For in my Father's house there are many mansions; and there is one, you may be sure for each of you, who thus "by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor and immortality."

To the church that is in thy house—Amen.

CALVINISM IN PRAYER.

In dealing with the problem of prayer, a good Methodist bishop puts one phase of the subject thus: "God can turn the hearts of men even as the rivers of water are turned, but he never turns rivers back to the fountain from which they spring; the rather he turns them by placing a hill here, a mountain there, and a far-reaching ridge yonder, and so he controls the course of the mightiest streams. He will not destroy the free agency of any soul, but he will build up obstacles on the right hand and on the left hand so that it becomes a matter of extreme difficulty for even the most self-willed person to have his own way." But why not at once say that God is almighty and sovereign, nor yet "is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established," as the Confession of Faith puts the matter? The truth is that the fundamental principles of Calvinism are imbedded in the doctrine of prayer. The Arminian who is most consistent in his expressions of doctrines to his fellow men gives it all up when he comes reverently, trustingly, under sincere conviction of sin and misery, to his knees.—South West Presbyterian.

SUPPLICATION.

Father,
I'm sailing blindly o'er life's billowy sea;
Hoarse roar the waves around me and the spray,
Of sorrow mingles with Hope's feeble ray;
Helpless and weary, come I unto thee,
Craving thy blessing; guide thou me.

Vainly,

I've fought against life's passing clouds,
Surcharged with thunderings deep and loud,
Their angry lightning flash has cut my inmost soul;
Father, the wound thy piercing eye can see,
Smile thou in pity, guide thou me.

Forgive

Me, that my life's so ill, vainly spent;
That oft within my heart the waves of discontent
Are surging; wilt thou let some ray
From heaven's pure sun serenely fall on me?
Humbly I ask it, guide thou me.

Cold earth

Ere long will clasp me to her matron breast;
The grave, I'll love it, for it proffers rest,
Sweetly the flow'ret bloometh where the unconscious lie;
And just beyond the death-chilled stream I see
Sweet home; there, Father, guide thou me.

Aye, guide!

I need the presence in life's every hour,
Help me withstand temptation's fearful power;
My roving thoughts I'd yield to thy control;
Unworthy though of thy kind care I be,
Yet One is worthy—guide thou me.

Herald and Presbyterian: One should learn not to be too greatly cast down by the trials that come to him. He who faints in the day of adversity shows that not only his strength is small, but that his faith is weak. God permits him to be tried for his own good in the way of wholesome discipline, and he should learn to be easy in mind and heart in the path that is marked out for him in divine love.

Presbyterian Witness: The religious instruction of our people, young and old, devolves upon the Home and the Church—upon the pulpit, the Sabbath School, the parents at their homes, the classes for instruction that are organized by parents and other faithful officers and members of the church. In this direction lie duty and eternal hope.

BLESSINGS OF LIFE-RELATIVE.

A dollar is one hundred cents no matter who owns it or what the circumstances of the owner. But a dollar may mean far more to one man than to another. If I were buying a farm it would not go far; but if I were starving it would supply all my wants. To the man who counts his wealth by millions a dollar is nothing; but to the man who has nothing a dollar may mean everything. The blessings of life are, after all, largely relative. They are estimated by our needs. And the man who has everything that heart can wish rarely appreciates the blessings of God as he should. The sense of need stimulates no spirit of gratitude commensurate with the good he has received. Surfeited with blessings he loses the consciousness of the divine favor. The family altar and the day of Thanksgiving are not much patronized among the mighty. Ingratitude to God is often greatest in those who have the most cause for thanksgiving.—United Presbyterian.

PRAYER.

Righteous art Thou, O Lord. Thou art so known to the host of heaven, where all are righteous. Thou art so known on the earth, where all are sinners, far gone from original righteousness. To all men Thou hast given some talent, some power of usefulness, and Thou hast made this power, whether great or small, the measure of their duty. Help us, we beseech Thee, to see clearly what our talent really is—what the means of honoring Thee which Thou hast entrusted to us really are. Make us honest and wise in seeking to know this. Sad, O Lord, are the disclosures which come before us as we so do. How much that we might have been have we failed to do! How much that we might have been have we failed to do! How much there has been in our heart and in our ways contrary to Thy will, and which we should have known how to put away from us. Truly we have left undone much that we should have done, and have done much that we ought not to have done. We are before Thee as those who have offended against law, and made light of the Gospel.

HOLD SUCH IN HONOR

Epaphroditus was a good man on a good mission. The Philippines sent him to Rome with a gift to Paul. It was a long and perilous journey. He was the representative of a despised faith to a man who was himself preaching a gospel for which the world cared little. But he did his duty, and he fell sick because of it; sick in a strange land, among a despised people; sick for righteousness sake, the glory of God and the good of his faithful servant. "Indeed he was sick, nigh unto death," writes his old friend to those who sent him. Paul asks the friends back in his home church to hold him and all such in honor. "Because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me." He was one of that noble band of choice spirits who have given their services ungrudgingly for the good of others and have lost their health because of it. They counted not their lives too dear to be given to the service of the Master. "Hold such in honor," said this magnificent friend of all humanity. It is the duty of the Church to hold in highest esteem the men and women who have been enfeebled because of their abundant labors for others. There is many a minister laid aside because of his fidelity to the cause of Jesus Christ; who gave his life for the church at a beggarly remuneration and, in his old days, finds himself in want. A thankful church should not be unmindful of such fidelity or fail to see that the lives of such are made comfortable. "Receive them therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation."—United Presbyterian.