

God with all his house. We admire the piety of this man the more, because he was placed in circumstances most unfavorable for it. He was a Centurion of the Italian band which was probably composed of idolaters; yet even in these circumstances he sought for opportunities for engaging in the duties of personal and family religion. With so bright an example before them, who can plead an excuse for the omission of such duties? As the neglect of family religion prevails to a great extent, the subsequent remarks are designed to shew the reasonableness and the advantages of it.

I. The nature of the social compact in a family, points out the propriety and necessity of family religion.

What is a family? it is a little community constituted by Divine appointment and bound together by the strongest and the tenderest ties.—The heads of this community have been united, not by chance, for there is no such thing, but by the express appointment and influence of God, and at the time, when his arrangements respecting the government of this world required it. If before this period they, as individuals, felt their dependence on God, praised Him for his goodness, and implored the supply of their wants; the same duties devolve upon them in their united capacity. But there is an additional interest infused into these duties from the consideration that the same benefits are enjoyed by both and therefore a united tribute of gratitude is due. The same wants are felt and are objects of common concern, and therefore united applications should be offered up. Mutual interest and property in each other and in each others welfare, must give additional strength to those feelings in which both participate, and greater fervour to the expression of their gratitude and dependence; their united worship must be more intense than the devotions of each.

A few years perhaps find them presiding over a household more or less numerous, with the rearing and educating of which they are entrusted. The members of this little society all stand in the same relation to the parents, and they have a common relation to each other; they have all participated in the same parental solicitude, which has watched over them and anticipated and supplied their continually returning wants; love and obedience are due to them from their children; here again numerous reasons for the exercise of family religion present themselves.—There are numerous wants in this little circle, and the principle of sympathy which pervades it leads every one to participate in the wants and sorrows of another. Their relation to each other is so intimate that what affects the condition of one affects the condition of another. All wants and enjoyments become matters of common concern; the cares of the governors of this little empire as well as those of the members of it; the griefs and joys are multiplied, numerous errands to the Throne of God are furnished, numerous escapes from danger or deliverances from affliction are experienced, and perhaps, striking interpositions of Divine Pro-