

My young friends; were you in the act of being instructed in Geography, Arithmetic and Geometry, or in any of the useful arts or sciences, you must learn well their first principles. These, by application, will be easily learned, because they are generally simple and few; and, if carefully reduced to daily practice, will lead you to perfection. And this is precisely what we want to ascertain in our Annual Examination of the Sabbath Schools, our sacred labours with you on the Lord's Day, and our daily prayers at the throne of grace, that ye may be rooted and grounded in the rudiments of our most holy Religion; that year after year ye may make progress in the Divine life; may be enabled by the help of God to reduce those evangelical principles to practice in your life and conversation; and, while parents and friends feel gratified in your improvement, Christ your Redeemer may be glorified in you, may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and may finally receive you into the kingdom of His glory.

For this purpose we not only witness with thankfulness the expansion of your youthful minds, by the elements of arts and sciences; but also recognize on them the impress of an early and pious education. These conjointly will be the greatest blessing, and the richest inheritance. If these means be sanctified, you have safer guides to God in Christ than the wandering Arab. Being asked one day by a stranger how he knew that there was a God, he replied; "Just as I observe this mark of a footstep on the sand, to be that of a man, or an animal that passed that way." And as the young and thoughtless wanderer in a state of nature cannot discern the ways of the Creator in every part of the Universe where He has been, and where He now is; yet the promise is in those very principles ye have recited, "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of Salvation."

However little you may esteem the lessons of your Bibles now in comparison of other works of fancy or of fiction, the time is not far distant, and will undoubtedly come, when its promises will be your only comfort, and you will be most happy to call a parent or a friend to your bedside to read a portion of its gracious contents suitable to your perishing and sinful condition. For ye already know that, though the talents, the discoveries, the experiments of the hero, the philosopher, the statesman, or the man of the world and of business, merit applause from the children of this generation, yet we seldom or ever hear the greatest of them all exclaim, "Let me die the death of the hero or of the statesman, &c." No! but "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." We presume not to affirm that this will be the desire of all

who have had fatherly pains bestowed on their early instruction! No! not even of some who shall live to old age, and die in their impenitence with no other forebodings within them than the prospects of falling into endless misery. We make mention of these things that you may take warning in the accepted time and day of Salvation. What trials await you we cannot tell, nor can we predict what effect they may have on your future well-being. These are variously felt by one, and blessed to another. Neither Job nor Quintilian, nor yet the man, who upon an occasion of affliction in his family said, If I could, I would dethrone the Almighty for the loss of my children * * *

But the Patriarch in submission to the will of God, said, "The Lord gave and hath taken away; blessed be His name." Thus also the late Dr. Liechman on his death-bed called a young nobleman of high rank, who had been under his care, saying "You see, my young friend, the situation in which I am now; and I am happy for your sake, that you are here to witness the tranquillity of my last moments. But it is not tranquillity only, but joy and triumph." His features brightened. He rose in energy as he spoke. And whence does this exultation spring? From that Book, alas! too much neglected indeed; but which contains invaluable treasures! But I perceive that the term philosophy has a greater charm in the ears of some than the Bible, or than the Bible Class. Well then the late Dr. Chalmers was not only a philosopher, but a divine and a man of God. On one occasion we had the happiness to see him enter the classroom where many young persons were examined on their knowledge of the Scriptures. With a Herculean and athletic form he stood, cast a glance of his eye around upon them all, and said with heartfelt satisfaction, "Continue ye in Bible exercises, my young friends; and, though I may have to go before you, yet yonder is our Mediator, and I hope to meet with many of you in the regions of glory." He is gone to eternity! But, alas! too many of our youth forget the precepts of the philosopher, for at 12 years, or so, they imagine themselves, no longer under obligations to serve the Lord or to read the Bible! The seed may be sown in earlier years! But, ah! the adversaries of youth enter the field, sow the tares, and Satan reaps the harvest.

But we must not forget the question which forms the subject matter of our evening's meditations, especially after we have been at pains to recite our Catechisms with accuracy. What grounds have you to think that the children of every family and Sabbath school may be called also sons and daughters of God? Let us recal the question to our minds; and inquire for a little into its import. "Adoption is an act of God's free grace whereby

we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the Sons of God." Are you not ambitious to vie with one another in order to obtain so honourable a name? And how can you expect from your unworthiness to be called by a name that is given to the Angels and to the Son of God in Heaven? These never sinned, or disobeyed God's commandments; but ye have forfeited your titles and lost your birthright by your disobedience. And it is not by an act of man's kindness, but by the grace of God that ye are called His sons. Again and again you may think on the most merciful act of this high decree of the Eternal; and from the very bottom of your hearts breathe a daily prayer of thankfulness unto God for His unalterable purposes of mercy towards you.

This great principle is suited to your state and capacities. By way of analogy it is an attempt to imitate Nature in the relationship of parents and children. Hence we read of the custom of adopting strangers for sons or daughters among the Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks and Romans. By mutual consent they also share in the name, provision, protection, and inheritance of the family. In course of nature it falls to them as a portion; yet in return they are under very many obligations to yield a ready, constant, willing, and cheerful obedience in their life and manners. One rebellious, stubborn action might be the loss of all; just so with you in the case of your everlasting portion. In another and more general acceptance of the term all mankind are the off-spring of God. But this is not the distinguishing mark by which we wish you to be known, for the greatest sinner is created and preserved by Providence. What we would impress on your minds is that, when God renews your hearts, changes the temper and disposition that is prone to evil and averse to good, enables you firmly to reverence, love and serve Him in all times and circumstances even to the end of life; He on the other hand in His good pleasure will give you protection, provision, pardon, a kingdom and crown of glory. This honour will be denied to the profane and impious who are called children of wrath. Hence you may read the favour that Mordecai and his adopted daughter, Queen Esther, obtained in the sight of God and men; how Daniel, and those men, who have got the name of the three famous children, were delivered from the wrath of a great king in the midst of the fiery furnace by one in personal glory like unto the Son of God.

Ye know of the royal decree of Cyrus that was found at Achmatta or Ecbatan, the capital of ancient Media, and how the Jews were indebted to this illustrious Prince for their deliverance, their restoration to Jerusalem, the building of their temple, and worship of God. Yet it was a