

reference to age : so long as both parent and child are in the flesh, will the relative duties of each remain an obligation.

Since this branch of duty is co-existent with the duration of life ; and since that instinct which binds the young to the parent ceases to operate forceably when the age of immature weakness is past ; some *fresh* motive, not depending on years or wants, is requisite to influence us lastingly in this manner,—After the physical bond is weakened, the union must be maintained by a *moral* bond. And this is supplied by the scriptures : “ Children obey your parents *in the Lord* ; honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee.” (Eph. vi. 1—3.) “ Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.” (Col. iii. 20.)

There cannot be a doubt, that the *manner* of shewing obedience and honour to parents must vary with our years : common sense, as well as our Saviour’s example, with regard to his mother, establishes a difference between the implicit obedience of a boy, and the considerate obedience of a man. Restrictions such as this are generally implied in the pithy precepts and maxims of the Bible. But, after admitting such a restriction, the above-quoted passages evidently relate to the whole period during which our parents may survive ; they establish that it is the child’s duty to shew them undiminished honour and obedience to the latest hour of their mortal existence.

The phrase “ *in the Lord* ” expresses the permanent Christian motive of filial obedience. “ *Lord*,” in this passage, appears to mean Christ as our supreme master, both by creation and by redemption. *His* will and appointment are to be so constantly regarded in our filial duties, that they become acts of direct obedience to the Lord Jesus.

The parent is one whom the Creator has placed in a certain situation as his representative, to act in his stead, and to receive a portion of the honour and obedience due to himself. At the birth of an infant, the father does indeed stand to the unconscious little one in the place of God. The mother stands in the relative situation of the church, which is the mother of us all as Christians, and to whom the rearing of the Lord’s children in righteousness and godliness is entrusted. The parent’s religious faith becomes almost necessarily the faith of the child : in the Christian faith, therefore, the father and mother are entrusted by the Lord Christ with the power and duty of bringing up her child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Though a family constitutes a real dominion or sovereignty of the smallest possible extent, the authority committed by God to its head is, in many respects, the most extensive upon earth. There is no other power, not even the monarch of the land, who either does or can interfere with the parental management of children. Parents are, in this matter, immediately next under God ; they are his undoubted delegates : consequently, the obedience and honour paid to them by their children are paid to God.