

The Provincial Wesleyan

Published under the direction of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Eastern British America.

Volume XXIII

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1871.

Number 37

FAMILY RELIGION, IN ITS RELATION TO THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

A DISCOURSE,
BY MATTHEW RICHIE, D. D.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.—
Josh. xxiv. 15.

The authority of the marriage institution rests on the express appointment of God. Nor is it possible to contemplate the various salutary purposes embraced in its original design, and its peculiar adaption to accomplish them, when unprejudiced by human depravity, without being profoundly impressed with the benignity and wisdom of Him of whom the family which there is on earth is named. To refer this to any other than a Divine origin, to reduce it to the level of a civil compact, a mere political expedient for the preservation of social order, and the protection of secular rights, is to divest it of its sacred dignity, and to ignore the teachings of the facts and lessons of the Bible, in relation to a subject upon which there is none more intimately associated with the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

The archetype of this hallowed union is portrayed for our instruction on the opening page of revelation. And, although some of its attendant circumstances have been profanely caricatured by sceptics, the precious record will descend to the latest generation, commanding the reverence and kindling the admiration of every thoughtful and devout reader. I refer especially to the method God was pleased to adopt in providing a help meet for Adam. In the case of the animal tribes, the two sexes sprang into existence simultaneously under the forming hand of the Creator. But Adam was first formed, then Eve; and in virtue of her peculiar formation, the two were constituted one. And may there not be truth as well as ingenuity in the quaint remark? "She was not made out of his head to surpass him, nor from his feet to be trampled on, but from his side to be equal to him, and near his heart to be dear to him." Be this as it may, the creative power of imagination may be safely challenged to suggest a procedure that would have indicated with more pathetic energy, the indissoluble obligation, and the mutual tenderness and endearment involved in the nuptial relation.

Why do I dwell on this topic with such particularity? I have no wish, my brethren, to conceal from you the motive that prompts me, especially to address those among you who are parents, and, with affectionate urgency to inculcate the duties God requires of you towards your children, on the faithful discharge of which so greatly depends the happiness of their earthly being and of their final destiny. I am solicitous at the outset, to impress you with the unalterable importance of the domestic constitution. Now, what think you, is the visible embodiment of the Divine ideal of the best system for the formation of human character? Its primal foundation was laid as we have seen by God's own hand in Paradise; and unaffected in its permanence by the shock of the fall, it is destined to sustain the mighty structure of humanity until the earth itself dissolves in the final conflagration. Now, what think you, is the character of the structure God intended to rear on this foundation? What objects did the Divine Being contemplate in the formation of an arrangement so unique, and of such potent and pervasive and permanent influence? Is it conceivable that he designed it merely to smooth, or at best to embellish, our pathway through this evanescent scene of existence?—to have no bearing, to exercise no influence, on eternity? Even all the unnumbered mind revolts at the thought of a constituted reasoner, and a conclusion, as incompatible with the majesty, the wisdom and the holiness of God, with the nature and destination of the human soul, and with the plastic power manifestly inherent in the family constitution, in order to subvert the highest ends of God's moral administration. Oh! how impressively do these considerations demonstrate the wisdom, and inculcate on every parent the practical adoption of Joshua's resolution—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The most splendid victories achieved by the illustrious successor of Moses in the conquest of Canaan have faded away among the things of the past; but this holy and magnanimous resolve consecrates while it embalms his memory, and will shine as a gem of celestial lustre in his coronet, at the coming of the Lord with all his saints.

I discover in this resolution of Joshua's heroic holiness an explicit avowal of the heart-stirring conviction of PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.—AN HEROIC PROPOSE TO DISCHARGE, IN THE FACE OF EVERY DIFFICULTY, THE OBLIGATIONS THAT RESPONSIBILITY INVOLVES, AN UNWAVERING FAITH IN THE EFFICIENCY AND SUCCESS OF HIS EFFORTS TO DO SO.

This analysis will indicate the course of our present address.

I. If, my brethren, you would emulate an example so eminently worthy of your imitation, as that exhibited in the text, you must acquire, and cherish in an honest and believing heart, a just estimate of the momentous responsibility inseparable from the parental relation.

Happily, no profound acquaintance with Christian casuistry, no learned and elaborate investigation, is necessary for this purpose. If your heart be only right with God, you can not long remain without an adequate knowledge of what He requires of you. There is, in fact, no department of duty in the wide range of practical truth to which the declaration of our Lord more emphatically applies—"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." The ethical intuitions of conscience, the instincts of natural affection—many of the clearest perceptions, most precious promises, and awful denunciations of the Bible, illustrated by its graphic narratives and glorious examples, will pour the effulgence of their concentrated light on the way in which you ought to go, leaving to you, if you do not walk therein, no alternative but the aggravated condemnation of those who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

The lamentably prevalent neglect of fam-

ily religion by those who live amid the light and advantages of the Gospel dispensation, is rebuked by the superabundant pages of pagan nations, ancient and modern. The Greeks and Romans had their *Lares and Penates*, a species of tutelary geni whom they worshipped as household gods. In every house images of these imaginary divinities were exhibited, and every hearth was an altar on which sacrifices were offered, to appease their displeasure, to acknowledge their bounty, or to invoke their favoring auspices. Such observances may awaken your pity, perhaps create a smile; and you may congratulate yourself on your superior knowledge. But do not, I entreat you, overlook the devout recognition of these observances—the devout recognition of the dependence of families on the superintending care of invisible Powers. Thou who abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrifice, by robbing the living and true God of the honor due to his name, in neglecting to rear an altar to him in your habitations?

It is a maxim in morals that the power to do good involves the obligation to perform it, in other words, that one principle are commensurate with one principle. To the rectitude of this principle you can frame no valid objection. And equally vain is the hope of allying its impartial application in the day of final audit, you know who has said, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him shall they ask the more." Let me earnestly beg of you, then, serious and conscientious, to stand-point, your relative position as a parent—the legitimate, peculiar influence with which it invests you, and the corresponding functions for the conscientious exercise of which you have to do. Impressed with such views, instead of trifling with your parental obligations, you will rather tremble at the magnitude and solemnity of the trust they involve, unless, indeed, as is too frequently the case, habitual omissions of duty have, to an ominous extent, impaired the sensibility of conscience.

By the designation of the blessed and the only Potentate, you are constituted, at once, the king, the prophet, and the priest of your household. A sceptre of moral power over the children whom God has given you, is placed in your hands as his representative, to be wielded with equal affection and firmness, for the suppression of every form of vice and immorality, and the promotion of whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely. To clothe your authority with the most solemn sanctions, the first commandment with promise imperatively requires your children to honor you; and they are so constituted that, notwithstanding their native depravity, before they are capable of recognizing their accountability to you, a spontaneous flow forth towards you, and then, their entire and long-continued dependence on your nurturing care, characterized by daily intercourse and most endearing assiduity, is singularly adapted to cherish those sentiments in their expanding hearts. Nor is it a fact less worthy of notice that, your influence over them commences at a period when the mind is most susceptible of moral impressions and vivid associations,—when those associations and impressions are most eagerly grasped and tenaciously retained; and, on that account, most likely to blend and incorporate themselves with the first elements of feeling—repressing the ebullitions of passion, regulating the suggestions and strengthening the jurisdiction of conscience,—this effectively co-operating with the character of the Holy Spirit, to impart to the working the dignity of principle, and the beauty of early piety.

In the name of God, then, I solemnly ask you, is there no practical significance in the marvellous provision which, with such maternal wisdom and more than maternal tenderness He has thus made for the religious training of your children? Has he delegated to you all this authority—distinguished by all this appropriate influence, that they may be torpid and operative in reference to the highest objects and sphere of their exertion? Can God hold that man guiltless, who buries or desecrates talents so sacred, and of such transcendent value? With what feelings, in the great day, will he meet—I do not say the flaming eye of Him who shall sit upon the great white throne, but—the eyes of the offspring of his own body, whose everlasting destiny of weal or woe, never produced in his bosom one throb of paternal solicitude, never elicited from his heart one fervent, effectual prayer?

There can not be a surer symptom of the last stage of deterioration in the history of a nation, or a darker omen of its impending ruin, unless a nation of discipline prevent, than the general neglect by its population of domestic devotion and discipline. Nothing tends so rapidly and effectually to enfeeble all the springs of social life. It had well nigh involved the complete moral dissolution of the patriarchal world, when God, by a most signal interposition, averted the desolating catastrophe. He called Abraham, a Syrian ready to stray, a nation of idolaters, and separated his descendants from the rest of mankind, by a line of national demarcation almost as perfect as if they had been transferred to another planet. What were the objects of that singular evolution of Divine Providence in the government of the world? Not merely that the Hebrew nation might be the depositary of his covenant and prophetic oracles, and the favored stock from which, according to the flesh, the Messiah should come; but that all their families, being hallowed from generation to generation by the heaven or revealed truth, religion purified from superstitious admixtures, might become the universal element of their spiritual existence. This view is amply vindicated by a passage in the prophecy of Malachi, which almost all the modern commentators, following implicitly and strangely misinterpreted. The prophet strongly remonstrates with the Hebrews for their formation of matrimonial alliances with the surrounding heathen, denouncing the practice as a gross infraction of the theocratic law under which they were placed, and as palpably in contravention of

one prominent purpose of God in their isolated unity. "Did he not, asks the indignation, yet had he the residue of the Spirit, and wherefore one? THAT HE MIGHT SEE A GODLY SEED." It is freely admitted that, even in the best periods of Jewish history this blessed end was attained in only an imperfect degree, and to a very limited extent. The failure, however, was attributable, not to any defect in the Divine plan, or to any inadequacy of the means provided for giving it full effect; but solely to the incurably evil propensities of a carnal and backsliding people.

Behold here, my brethren, the grand design of God still, unchanged except by a more perfect development, under the Christian dispensation,—that he might seek a Godly seed. We are told that God loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob; but the gates, as well as the ways of Zion, will soon mourn, if the altars of God are cast down in the dwellings of Jacob. Let the voice of rejoicing and salvation be hushed in the tabernacles of the righteous—let family religion fall to a frigid and lifeless form, and Jehovah might well be written on the walls of the sanctuary. For in such a state of things, public worship would inevitably assume the aspect of a vain and vapid ceremonial—the melancholy symbol of departed glory.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Our arguments and illustrations on this fertile topic are far from being exhausted, but our limited forbids expansion. I have simply indicated a train of reflection, which your own meditation may profitably pursue to an almost indefinite extent. I cannot, however, conclude this part of the subject without an earnest appeal to your hearts and consciences, suggestive of several aspects under which your parental obligations ought habitually to engage your devout attention. Let me say them with all solemnity.—If you recognize your indebtedness to God for all the domestic blessings and comforts you have experienced, and your entire dependence upon him for the continuance of them—If you are conscious of the highest earthly happiness—the purity, the affectionate harmony, the purity, the peace and the piety of your household;—if the world has a right to claim, that you send not forth on its busy theatre, already crowded with the living victims of parental unfaithfulness, children more likely to prove a curse than a blessing to society, to add to the mass of the corrupt, instead of being the salt of the earth, the event of its putrefaction;—if the Lord Christ justly looks to you for accessions to the vacancies constantly occurring by reason of death, and to recruit the ranks of her sacramental host;—if you have any bowels of compassion for your offspring, and should at the thought of their perishing through your fault; then do you owe it to God—to yourself—to the souls of your children, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and by Him entrusted to your care, to adopt at once and irrevocably the resolution of Joshua—"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

II. Cheered by the hope that the desires and purposes of your hearts respond, as I am quite sure the convictions of your judgment must, to the appeals, let me request your attention to the leading duties included in the resolution I am endeavoring to inculcate, and to the spirit of unflinching allegiance to God, in which alone you can hope to exemplify it with preserving fidelity. "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?"

The familiar precept—"Train up a child in the way he should go," is much more comprehensive than is generally conceived. Adequately appreciated, it implies the combined and continuous use of all those means and influences, those instructions, restraints and encouragements adapted to the different seasons and exigencies of childhood and youth, so as best to insure, under the Divine blessing, the earliest possible development of religious character.

Assiduous instruction in the facts and principles of the oracles of God, is, of course, of primary importance. The emphatic iteration of the text, "Thou shalt be enjoined on God's ancient people, whose motto, nor can it escape the notice of the observant reader, that it is intimately associated with the inculcation of love to God:—Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." An illustrious example of the efficacy of maternal faithfulness in the observance of this injunction—and the great day will reveal similar instances without number—is seen in the juvenile proficiency of a motley in divine knowledge, and his early consecration to the service of God. From a child, he knew the holy Scriptures—a significant proof, that while the sublimity of the themes of inspiration, challenges the admiration, and richly rewards the research of angelic intelligences, by the inimitable simplicity of the words which the Holy Gospel teacheth, those themes are presented in a form level to the capacity of a child. How clearly does this interesting fact evince it to be the will of God, that religious instruction should be coeval with the dawn of intellect. The great facts of creation, providence and redemption, may be digested upon the memory before the ability to read can be acquired; awakening and gratifying the curiosity of the opening mind with knowledge, compared with which, the silly legends of superstition and the most exalted delineations of romance, to say nothing of their pernicious tendency, are trifles light as air. The Bible, the Bible, is by eminence, the text-book of family tuition. Other books, when the selection is judicious, may be not only proper but important to

put into the hands of children; but in the appropriate sphere of parental influence and effort in the work of education, the Bible ought ever to be the central orb of the system, while human productions, however excellent, revolve satellites in concentric orbits around it, receiving and reflecting its heavenly light. Possessed of this authentic revelation of the will and purposes of God, on what high vantage ground does the truly Christian parent stand! Coming forth among his children from the sanctuary of private communion with his Father and their Father, bearing on his brow the lustre, and in his hand the law of God.

Nor let me be understood to mean, that this instruction should assume a rigidly systematic form, or be confined to regularly recurring periods. It ought, on the contrary, to be free and general as the atmosphere of domestic affection, seizing, with the spontaneity of holy impulse, every passing opportunity to instil the principles of truth and duty. "In the morning say thou, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether both shall be alike good."

But the family can not be sanctified, even by the word of God, without prayer. No parent who has himself tasted that the Lord is gracious, will think of demanding an express precept enjoining family devotion, as though he could be induced to yield this tribute of homage to God only in reluctant compliance with imperative requirement. There are duties of such obvious obligation, so clearly written on the tablet of the heart, and so consonant to the dictates of reason and conscience that it would seem scarcely to accord with the majesty of the Supreme Legislator specifically to command them. To this class, beyond all question, belong the duty of domestic worship. Every principle and impulse of true godliness prompt to the blessed exercise. And he who does not regard it as a privilege of priceless value, as well as a becoming observance, has yet to learn what that meaneth. "I will behave myself in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

If God does not expect and require the devotional acknowledgement of families as such, what means that most fearful of prophetic imprecations? "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Moreover, the prescriptive authority of innumerable ages lends its sanction to the practice. The first form of social worship was that of the family. Whether Abraham pitched his tent he built an altar. You read of God sanctifying his sons and daughters, by offering expiatory sacrifices for them. Thus, it is in the name of the Lord, returned, we are told, "to bless his household." It was while Cornelius, who was only a proselyte of the Jewish religion, was engaged in family prayer, that an angel was commissioned to assure him that his prayers and alms had ascended in memorial before God. More venerable and authoritative precedents—more unequivocal indications of the Divine will, in relation to this branch of parental obligation, it were highly unreasonable and presumptuous to require. From the altar of morning and evening prayer in the family radiate all the influences that constitute it a church in miniature, and add wonderful force to the inculcation of filial duties.

The responsibility of parents is materially augmented by the possession of yet another element of influence which, though briefly alluded to in a previous paragraph, is here entitled to a prominent notice—namely, the authority vested in them for the wise and efficient government of their families. The estimation in which God holds fidelity in the exercise of this prerogative, may be ascertained gathered from the memorable testimony by which he has encircled the name of the father of the faithful with everlasting honor—"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." To insure the most salutary efficacy of domestic rule, I need scarcely say, it must be characterized by dignity without despotism, by the utmost tenderness of affection without any compromise of religious principle.

On this topic, permit to quote the forcible and delicious words of one whose memory I cherish in affectionate veneration—the celebrated Dr. Olin. Referring to the period of childhood he says—"Over this period of human life, the laws of society, no less than the laws of heaven, make the parents' authority supreme. The father represents the divine Lawgiver, whose vicegerent he is for carrying out the gracious designs of an infinite benevolence, in the establishment of upright principles, and the formation of a pure, virtuous character. All most everything depends on pre-occupying the soul with right habits, of which none is so intimately connected with favorable religious developments as the habit of obedience to legitimate authority. This is a strictly fundamental principle in religion, and should be the first object in family government. Every parent who fails in this respect, in the same degree entails upon his child, a curse of fearful omens. He fosters the inborn enmity of the heart to the claims of religion and so radiates and strengthens its opposition to the government of God, that the usual agencies of the Gospel are very likely to prove ineffectual to the great end of piety and salvation. That this dereliction of parental faithfulness is one of the most common as well as inveterate hindrances to conversion, as experience and observation offer their concurrent testimony. It may be laid down as a Christian axiom, that the rebellious spirit which refuses obedience to parents will be the last to render it to God."

If the remarks now offered to your consideration have aided you in forming an intelligent appreciation of your parental duties, they have not doubt also suggested some formidable obstacles to their faithful performance. But, if your determination be only fixed to meet, and by the grace of God, to overcome these difficulties, they will prove in your experience less real than imaginary. It is certain none of them is invincible. Resolutely encountered they will fly before you like a routed foe, leaving you in undisturbed possession of a heritage of blessing that will amply compensate, even in this life, every sacrifice you make for its attainment. After all, the most formidable obstacle may exist within your own heart. An order of Joshua's complex resolution. He first determined to devote himself to the service of God, and then to associate his family with him in the blessed communion. Go, and do thou likewise. If you could be induced to enter on the duties of family religion without personal dedication to God, one thing you would still lack, and that one thing of all others the most essential to qualify you for a right discharge of them. Neglect of your own salvation would neutralize all your efforts for the good of others. An union from the Holy One—the union of regenerating grace, is not less necessary to prepare you for the sacred office you ought to sustain in your family, than was the precious oil poured on the head of the Jewish high priest to consecrate him to his office in the temple. This alone can give to your precepts, to your prayers, and to your domestic rule, the persuasive and irresistible enforcement of a holy example. This alone can bathe your soul and spirit in a positive element of moral efficiency which, mingling with the tide of daily life, will emanate forth in hallowed, healing influences on each loved object of your parental solicitude.

III. The divine conditions of success being satisfied, *Amor facti in Deo*, that he will crown your prayerful efforts for the conversion and salvation of your children with results proportionate to your largest hopes.

It is encouraging to mark that on this point Joshua entertained no paralyzing doubt. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Why then should you indulge unbelief and those auspicious presages, promises and guarantees of a dispensation under which grace doth much more abound? The promises given under the old economy, be it remembered, are not superseded, but richly supplemented under the new. And the most memorable of those promises to God's people should be noted with adoring gratitude, explicitly comprehend their children: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and unto thy children after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." This covenant between me and you, and your seed after thee. Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, "The promise is made to you and your children," and in the name of the Lord, returned, we are told, "to bless his household." It was while Cornelius, who was only a proselyte of the Jewish religion, was engaged in family prayer, that an angel was commissioned to assure him that his prayers and alms had ascended in memorial before God. More venerable and authoritative precedents—more unequivocal indications of the Divine will, in relation to this branch of parental obligation, it were highly unreasonable and presumptuous to require. From the altar of morning and evening prayer in the family radiate all the influences that constitute it a church in miniature, and add wonderful force to the inculcation of filial duties.

ies, they will prove in your experience less real than imaginary. It is certain none of them is invincible. Resolutely encountered they will fly before you like a routed foe, leaving you in undisturbed possession of a heritage of blessing that will amply compensate, even in this life, every sacrifice you make for its attainment. After all, the most formidable obstacle may exist within your own heart. An order of Joshua's complex resolution. He first determined to devote himself to the service of God, and then to associate his family with him in the blessed communion. Go, and do thou likewise. If you could be induced to enter on the duties of family religion without personal dedication to God, one thing you would still lack, and that one thing of all others the most essential to qualify you for a right discharge of them. Neglect of your own salvation would neutralize all your efforts for the good of others. An union from the Holy One—the union of regenerating grace, is not less necessary to prepare you for the sacred office you ought to sustain in your family, than was the precious oil poured on the head of the Jewish high priest to consecrate him to his office in the temple. This alone can give to your precepts, to your prayers, and to your domestic rule, the persuasive and irresistible enforcement of a holy example. This alone can bathe your soul and spirit in a positive element of moral efficiency which, mingling with the tide of daily life, will emanate forth in hallowed, healing influences on each loved object of your parental solicitude.

III. The divine conditions of success being satisfied, *Amor facti in Deo*, that he will crown your prayerful efforts for the conversion and salvation of your children with results proportionate to your largest hopes.

It is encouraging to mark that on this point Joshua entertained no paralyzing doubt. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Why then should you indulge unbelief and those auspicious presages, promises and guarantees of a dispensation under which grace doth much more abound? The promises given under the old economy, be it remembered, are not superseded, but richly supplemented under the new. And the most memorable of those promises to God's people should be noted with adoring gratitude, explicitly comprehend their children: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and unto thy children after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." This covenant between me and you, and your seed after thee. Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, "The promise is made to you and your children," and in the name of the Lord, returned, we are told, "to bless his household." It was while Cornelius, who was only a proselyte of the Jewish religion, was engaged in family prayer, that an angel was commissioned to assure him that his prayers and alms had ascended in memorial before God. More venerable and authoritative precedents—more unequivocal indications of the Divine will, in relation to this branch of parental obligation, it were highly unreasonable and presumptuous to require. From the altar of morning and evening prayer in the family radiate all the influences that constitute it a church in miniature, and add wonderful force to the inculcation of filial duties.

If Christian parents fully apprehend and faithfully fulfil all that is implied in training up a child in the way he should go, why should they not appropriate the consolation of the divine assurance that "when he is old he will not depart from it? Nor ought the doctrines of constitutional depravity and moral agency to repress this inspiring hope, but rather to operate as incentives to greater assiduity, by loving effort, and trustful prayer, and improved exertion, in reliance on the power and plenitude of redeeming grace, to counteract the native proclivity of the heart to evil. From such efforts, prosecuted with the patience of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope, the especial blessing of God, unless his covenant fail, cannot be withheld. Stagger not, then, at the promise of God through unbelief. Do not hesitate to pledge your house as well as yourself to the service of God. Have you already done so? Hail! thou highly favored of the Lord; the Lord is with thee. Continue instant in prayer. Bow before the Mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of Calvary's transcendent sacrifice, and urge with unflinching importunity the petition, than which none is more acceptable to God: "Show thy work unto thy servants and thy glory unto thy children."

Doubt not that He who turns the hearts of the fathers to the children, in yearning, ever-breathing desire for their salvation, will turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, in responsive evidences of early penitence and piety. All animate with this blissful anticipation, nor being aught of heart or hope, bear up in the face of every discouragement, and, fixing your eye on the pole-star of duty, steer right onward. And—

As a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt her new-dressed offspring to the skies,
Employ each art, reprieve each dull delay,
Alture to higher worlds, and lead the way.

This discourse being so practical and hortatory in its character throughout, I deem it superfluous to attempt any detailed application of its lessons. I close by addressing a few sentences to two classes of parents respectively, assuming that both recognize the scriptural propriety and obligation of infant baptism: the one, however, making no conscience of dedicating their children to God in that ordinance, but the other, from some cause, neglecting to do so.

Let me remind you whose children have been solemnly presented to God, and impressed with the visible seal of his covenant, that while the promises of that covenant are God's, its reciprocal vows and conditions are yours. Have you laid them to heart? Are you bringing up your children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord? You willingly labor that they may not want the bread that perisheth, and grieve no expense to procure for them the best mental cultivation in your power. But do you care with proportionate solicitude for their souls? Are you training them for God? You justly stigmatize that man as an apostate who provides not for his own, and specially for those of his own house: and is your inconsistency,

thank you, less flagrant or fearful if you are neglecting to make provision for the eternity of the objects of your most tender affections?

I turn, in conclusion, for a moment, to those who have never dedicated their children to God in baptism, though convinced that it is both a duty and a privilege so to do. I am no believer in the papal dogma of baptismal regeneration, that figure of superstition on which so many build the hope of heaven for themselves and their offspring. Nor do I entertain a shadow of a doubt respecting the salvation of all, without exception, who die in infancy, whether baptized or unbaptized, since "of such is the kingdom of heaven." But this consideration, instead of diminishing your obligation to place your children by baptism in visible connection with the church of God, makes that duty the more imperative. They belong to Him more than to you. The Father of the Spirits of all flesh claims them. The blessed Redeemer has come upon all men to justification of life, claims them. The Holy Spirit who even now spreads over them his wings of love, and doves itself brooding on their souls, claims them. And will you deny to the true God the grateful homage of a public acknowledgement of his claim? Bring them, I entreat you, without further delay, to the sanctuary, the most appropriate place for an office so solemn, and offer them as living, acceptable sacrifices on the altar of God. You will thus guard around yourself and your children the genial, holy sympathies of all the pious in the congregation of God's people, who will not fail to pray that thereforth the high resolve may be written on your heart, and exemplified in your life, AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD.

It is encouraging to mark that on this point Joshua entertained no paralyzing doubt. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Why then should you indulge unbelief and those auspicious presages, promises and guarantees of a dispensation under which grace doth much more abound? The promises given under the old economy, be it remembered, are not superseded, but richly supplemented under the new. And the most memorable of those promises to God's people should be noted with adoring gratitude, explicitly comprehend their children: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and unto thy children after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." This covenant between me and you, and your seed after thee. Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, "The promise is made to you and your children," and in the name of the Lord, returned, we are told, "to bless his household." It was while Cornelius, who was only a proselyte of the Jewish religion, was engaged in family prayer, that an angel was commissioned to assure him that his prayers and alms had ascended in memorial before God. More venerable and authoritative precedents—more unequivocal indications of the Divine will, in relation to this branch of parental obligation, it were highly unreasonable and presumptuous to require. From the altar of morning and evening prayer in the family radiate all the influences that constitute it a church in miniature, and add wonderful force to the inculcation of filial duties.

If Christian parents fully apprehend and faithfully fulfil all that is implied in training up a child in the way he should go, why should they not appropriate the consolation of the divine assurance that "when he is old he will not depart from it? Nor ought the doctrines of constitutional depravity and moral agency to repress this inspiring hope, but rather to operate as incentives to greater assiduity, by loving effort, and trustful prayer, and improved exertion, in reliance on the power and plenitude of redeeming grace, to counteract the native proclivity of the heart to evil. From such efforts, prosecuted with the patience of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope, the especial blessing of God, unless his covenant fail, cannot be withheld. Stagger not, then, at the promise of God through unbelief. Do not hesitate to pledge your house as well as yourself to the service of God. Have you already done so? Hail! thou highly favored of the Lord; the Lord is with thee. Continue instant in prayer. Bow before the Mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of Calvary's transcendent sacrifice, and urge with unflinching importunity the petition, than which none is more acceptable to God: "Show thy work unto thy servants and thy glory unto thy children."

Doubt not that He who turns the hearts of the fathers to the children, in yearning, ever-breathing desire for their salvation, will turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, in responsive evidences of early penitence and piety. All animate with this blissful anticipation, nor being aught of heart or hope, bear up in the face of every discouragement, and, fixing your eye on the pole-star of duty, steer right onward. And—

As a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt her new-dressed offspring to the skies,
Employ each art, reprieve each dull delay,
Alture to higher worlds, and lead the way.

This discourse being so practical and hortatory in its character throughout, I deem it superfluous to attempt any detailed application of its lessons. I close by addressing a few sentences to two classes of parents respectively, assuming that both recognize the scriptural propriety and obligation of infant baptism: the one, however, making no conscience of dedicating their children to God in that ordinance, but the other, from some cause, neglecting to do so.

Let me remind you whose children have been solemnly presented to God, and impressed with the visible seal of his covenant, that while the promises of that covenant are God's, its reciprocal vows and conditions are yours. Have you laid them to heart? Are you bringing up your children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord? You willingly labor that they may not want the bread that perisheth, and grieve no expense to procure for them the best mental cultivation in your power. But do you care with proportionate solicitude for their souls? Are you training them for God? You justly stigmatize that man as an apostate who provides not for his own, and specially for those of his own house: and is your inconsistency,

HOW WAS SAUL OF TARSUS BAPTIZED?

Was he dipped, or immersed all over in water? That, was the circumstance mentioned by the sacred historian. At the time of his baptism he was staying in the house of a man called Judas, in Damascus. According to the directions which the Lord gave to Ananias, he went to the house of Judas and found Saul there, unable to see, who had been fasting and praying, no doubt, for three days. Ananias met this man humble and penitent, and, "putting his hands on him," said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as if it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, (anans, standing up) and was baptized. And when he had received meat (food) he was strengthened."

Such in detail were the circumstances of the baptism of the late persecuting Saul of Tarsus. In his weak and faint condition, having neither eaten nor drunk anything for three days, would they not offer him some refreshment before taking him from the house of Judas to a river or pool, if there was any in the city, to be immersed? It was unaccountable, if he were actually dipped in water, that there is not a word to intimate the fact in a history so circumstantially narrated as this of Saul's baptism. Besides, it appears from the words of the history that he was baptized in the house in a standing position, which must have been simply impossible if he were immersed. After the rite was administered, and "when he had taken food, he was strengthened."

We must bear in mind that Saul of Tarsus, who is known to us as Paul the Apostle, was a Jew and a Pharisee, and had been accustomed to see baptisms performed by sprinkling from three rites, and these three were all performed by sprinkling. In the Jewish law we find the word *dip*, or *dipping*, eight times; but they were dipping in blood and running water, or dipping in oil, or in the waters of purification. But none of these dipping was an immersion; not one of them is the dipping applied to the whole person; not one of them is an act of purification; but in seven cases out of the eight the dipping is preparatory to an act of purification by sprinkling.

The word *sprinkle* occurs ten times in the Jewish laws, and in every case but one it denotes the rite of purification, and in four cases it is applied directly to the person. In two instances it is used by the prophets, in both of which it refers to the work of purifying to be effected by the coming of the Messiah.

Considering, then, the education of Paul as a Pharisee, familiar with the rite of sprinkling as an act or symbol of purification and of consecration to God, what must have been his ideas of the mode of baptism? He would have been amazed if told that he must be dipped all over in water to be received into the Church of God under the new dispensation inaugurated on the day of Pentecost.—*Christian Observer.*

THE PASTOR OF THE FUTURE.

ONE of our Quarterly Reviews has the following news as to the "Pastor of the Future."

Newman Hall preaches in Surrey Chapel, where Rowland Hill, a man of ten times his pulpit power, once preached; but the work done for Christ by Newman is tenfold greater than that wrought by his eloquent predecessor. He preaches through the organs of the press; he has developed and inspired and administered; through his benevolent society, relieving the sick poor at their dwellings and reaching eight hundred cases yearly; through his Christian Institution Society, visiting all the neighbourhood with tract distribution; his Dorcas and female Clothing Society for poor women; his School of Industry for the training of neglected girls; his Sunday-School Society, with its four-hundred and seventeen teachers; his open air meetings and lodging house prayer meetings conducted by laymen; his popular works, lectures and musical entertainments for the working classes;—through all of which it is calculated that not less than one hundred thousand are annually brought under the influence of Christianity. Now, it is true that this is an eminent instance of the power of the minister as organizer and administrator. But conceive once what the influence of Newman Hall would be if his strength were solely or mainly in the pulpit. Shear away from him the organizing, and administering work which has made Surrey Chapel such a camp of Christian forces; and then, by the contrast, learn what might be the efficiency in his sphere, and according to his opportunities and capacities, of the minister who now is putting the best of his strength and hope into his pulpit work.

Clearly, I think the business of preaching in a settled church and for a man of ordinary power is not chief, but subordinate. If as pastors, we can find something for every man to do, can mark out each one's place, and even an individual interest in specific Christian work, we shall have no trouble in finding interested hearers. But simply to preach from Sunday to Sunday to a people as one lectures to a lyceum, with no other immediate objective point than to say something fresh and stirring, in all the work of the modern minister is ever seeking some new plan. There is nothing the way of means that can freshen the pulpit like bringing it into direct contact with the co-operative work of the people. The organizing, administrative preacher will never be dull to his co-laborers; and his work with them, and through them will most rapidly increase the number of those who from an interest in the work of Christ, will find an interest in the word of Christ.

A clerical joke at the expense of a brother of the cloth is going the rounds. It is said that a clergyman who preached in a prison, a Sunday or two since, began his discourse in his tradition I way by saying, "I am glad, my friends, to see so many of you here this morning."

Their daily delight shall be in his name, they shall as their right His righteousness claim; His righteousness wearing, and cleansed by his blood, Bold shall they appear in the presence of God!—*Moore's Life of Mrs. Fletcher.*