

That family religion has an intimate bearing on personal piety, as well as the spiritual well-being of the Church, there can be no doubt. God has so ordered matters, in the moral arrangements which he has made for our benefit, that religion prospers best when its varied duties are equally attended to; whereas neglect, in the case of one duty, if it argues not want of spiritual life, has an injurious effect on the whole spirit of religion. How far the worship of God is daily observed in the families belonging to our church, it might be hazardous to affirm on the ground of any information that can safely be relied upon. That God is daily worshipped by very many of the families throughout our church there can be no doubt. It would be a sad thing were it otherwise. We have to bless God for the grace which inclines so many of the heads of families "to call on the name of the Lord." But is there no reason to fear that this duty is less observed now than it once was among us; and that, in this respect, we have declined from "the good old ways" of our fathers? Is there not ground to fear that, by many who have assumed the solemn responsibilities which attach to the head of a household, this duty is only partially performed, and that by others, it is not performed at all? And, should this state of things exist with regard to any considerable number of the families of our church, does it not furnish cause for deep concern to all who love the good of Zion, and especially to those heads of families themselves, who, in their family capacity, are thus "living without God in the world?" Does this unwillingness to bow the knee to God at the family altar proceed from alienation of the heart from God? Does it proceed from coldness and deadness of affection in religion? Or, does it arise from the spirit of the world asserting its claims to the entire time, and energies, and regards of professors of the gospel, to the exclusion of all serious thoughts of God and the things of eternity? Whatever the cause may be from which such a state of things proceeds, the evil superinduced is one deeply to be deplored. Suffer then, dear brethren, you who are parents living in the condition now described, the word of exhortation, while we bring under your notice the claims of the duty you are forgetting or neglecting. As ministers are directed to call the attention of their respective congregations to the subject, it will be enough at present to indicate briefly one or two considerations which ought to weigh with you, as professing Christians, in leading you to commence, without delay, the performance of a duty so important in itself, and one fraught, to those engaging in it, with so many advantages.

1. The worship of God in the family is a matter of divine obligation. He who established the family institution, appointed religion to be the governing influence by which its ends were to be secured. These ends cannot be secured, according to divine arrangement, if God is not acknowledged. He is "the God of the families of the whole earth," and as such he must be worshipped and obeyed. God establishes his covenant with believers, and their seed after them, in their family capacity. "I am your God," is his language, "and the God of your seed." The "household" of the believer, under the gospel, is recognised as a constituent part of the church of Christ, which, in its expanded form, assumes the character of "the household of faith." Is there not good reason, then, why the believer should say, as did the King of Israel, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart?" Has not God made his people "king and priests