

though they receive recognition, are irregularly and inefficiently discharged. If this is true, it is a sad outlook for the future not less of the families themselves, than of the Church. I earnestly and lovingly exhort all heads of families who have been thus careless, to reform this grave negligence. Do this at once. Begin with the New Year! Some of you are asking; How can we undertake this difficult duty? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him: but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."

*As to the institution of family worship:* See how easy this is made to any willing Christian parent! The Bible is pretty much the only hand-book which parents need for guidance in conducting family services. Having first caused your children (and your servants too, if you have servants) to sit reverently around you, take down this Book of books and read to them a Chapter or a Psalm, or both, in course. Then kneel down with them, and on their behalf and your own, offer unto God thanksgiving, confess your sins, implore through Christ forgiveness, and ask blessings for others—for relatives and neighbours, for the Church and for the world. In doing, or in attempting to do this, you could find no more suitable words than are contained in the Book of Psalms. What better form of *Thanksgiving*, for example, than the opening verses of the hundred and thirtieth Psalm; or of confession and of seeking forgiveness than the verses of the fifty-first Psalm, or of prayer for the Church and the world than the sixty-seventh Psalm? Forethought and a little preparation, with only the Bible in his hand, would in a few weeks qualify any Christian father or mother, of even ordinary intelligence, for the seemly and profitable discharge of those daily services which pertain to a family altar.

*As to imparting to your children Christian instruction:* Your great source of help is the Bible; and next to the Bible the Shorter Catechism. I fear that the Bible is not so much a family book as it used to be; that in many of our families it is comparatively set aside, and that there is an avowed preference for such sentimental, half-religious, inane books as largely

fill the shelves of many Sunday-school libraries. The Shorter Catechism too, that noble compend of Christian truth, which has been the means of handing down to us from the past, an unimpaired and readily-understood system of Evangelical doctrine—is less regarded than formerly by Presbyterian families. I cannot too strongly recommend this doctrinal standard of the Church, as a book to be learned by heart in early life. I should have unbounded hope in regard to the future of our Church if we could secure the general revival in the families who compose our congregations, of the old-time Sabbath-evening family service, with its Bible-reading, its singing of Psalms and Hymns, its prayers, and its Catechetical exercises.

Parents may not transfer to others the responsibility of the Christian up-bringing of their families, not to day-school teachers; not to the Sabbath-school; not even to the Church. The Apostle Paul, speaking of this matter of the Christian training of children, throws the chief responsibility on parents: "Ye fathers bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." In the midst of such Christian faithfulness in the household, Timothy grew up. From a child he knew the Holy Scriptures which were able to make, and did make, him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Believe me, it is in the family that the first and truest lessons in religion are learned, and that the earliest God-ward aspirations and the most abiding respect for the Bible and the Lord's Day are awakened.

I do not overlook the value of the Sabbath-school. Its influence for good in society and in the Church is confessedly great and widespread. But it can never take the place or do the work which Holy Scripture enjoins upon Christian parents. It can do much, as it has already done, to meet that criminal neglect as to Christian instruction which prevails, alas, in many families among us; much in the way of supplying Christian instruction to the children of careless and ungodly parents; much in imparting scriptural knowledge to those of our young people who have emerged from childhood; much, in its higher classes, to give a Christian tone to the young, and to create in their minds respect for the Bible, the Sabbath,