

intercourse with the world, and the backwardness of our fallen nature to receive even the message of eternal life, and to yield to the restraints, however salutary, of heavenly wisdom, can it be necessary to say, that without the constant appliances of religious training at home, and especially an authoritative as well as affectionate requirement of attendance on the exercises of daily devotion, you cannot expect to witness the development of christian principle in those around you, or see your houses blessed with the lovely fruits of godliness. That religion is a thing between God and the conscience of each individual, is an irrelevant truism, quite abused when social duty is, under cover of this pretence, merged in personal. Does not every argument or reason by which secret prayer can be enforced point alike to the reasonableness of social prayer? And though we had no more in Scripture than the general inculcation of "all prayer and supplication in the spirit," which an inspired apostle has bidden us watch unto, in close connection with his mention of the christian armour (see Eph. 6); does not this clearly imply that in our various capacities and relations we are to welcome, yea, watch for, every natural opportunity for or call to prayer; and, most plainly and primarily, that those dwelling together under one roof and owning one family government, should recognize as included in the "all prayer," thus enjoined, a united acknowledgment of the God of the families of the whole earth. Surely if any duty incumbent at all times has its special seasons and opportunities, which reason is to recognize, what so natural and befitting as that those whom the shades of evening daily gather around the one hearth, or the returning sun again disperses from the same home to their various spheres of industry, or scenes of danger and temptation, should, by the morning and evening sacrifice to the Author of all their blessings, recognize their common wants and enjoyments, and hallow their mutual affections and sympathies. If, in exceptional cases, both seasons cannot be embraced, it is surely scarcely possible for a man of devout feelings to omit both. Does not nature itself dictate the offering? Will not the affection of each juvenile dweller under your roof respond to your calls to send united homage to God? Will not the consciences of your dependents, where not seared and debased, secretly reproach you for the neglect of so obvious an obligation? And, have not the approved examples of family religion recorded in Scripture all the force of precepts? We find Abraham commended by God as one who would command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord. We find his children and domestics included with him in the one covenant of circumcision. We find Isaac and Jacob erecting their altar as constantly as their tents, and calling on their families to put away strange gods. We find Job solicitously sanctifying his house, or seeking by prayer and sacrifice to hallow the festal intercourse of his children. And do we not find even the holy man Eli reprov'd, because, with misguided affection he looked on, too indulgent of the youthful folly of his sons; and hear men inspired of God giving expression to the voice of natural conscience, and announcing the mind of the Lord Himself—one in his resolution to walk with a perfect heart in his house at home, another invoking judgment in these solemn words: "Pour out thy fury on the families that call not on thy name." Finally, in the New Testament, besides the familiar and precious words of the blessed Saviour addressed to adults, implying the duty of prayer with as well as for children, "Suffer little children to come unto me," we have the positive apostolic precept, "Parents bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and in the history of the primitive Church, the