

no enforcing authority for its own sake in mere trifles. Reasons cannot always be given, but even young children may wisely be told the reason for many commands, and as children grow older authority merge gently and imperceptibly into trusty counsel.

Not only the commands given, but the spirit and tone with which they are given may stir up rebellion in the heart of a child. Our text contemplates this danger—recognizes it as an evil to be guarded against by parents, and hence the injunction, "Provoke not your children to wrath. There is perhaps nothing so provoking as an exacting, unreasonable and fault-finding spirit, and neither man, woman nor child can help being provoked to anger under any system that makes life a tread-mill and man or child a slave.

Where the discipline is provoking the instruction must fail of its proper fruits, and hence this text sets this down as first to be attended to. Be loving, be reasonable. Understand and respect your children. Awaken in them higher motives than the fear of you and of the rod. Gain if possible their love and respect. Guard by all means against what can only provoke them to wrath.

Even in school and in secular duties this is very important; but in the matter of religious instruction, whether at home or in the Sunday School, it is all important. Religious lessons may be imposed, and religious duties enforced in a spirit that, so far as the child is concerned, drives religion out of both the lesson and the duty. To teach the religion of Christ aright to children we must have the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and impress and teach more even by the Spirit we breathe than by the doctrines taught.

It would be easy to enlarge on this topic. But too many words might only cause you to lose sight of the solemn warning contained in the pointed words of the Apostle. They are words for parents and teachers to ponder well—words too often passed over as if they had no meaning—no application—no part to play in pastoral teaching, or practical religion. Ye who build on Paul's theology, ye who admire his zeal and fidelity, consider here his plea for childhood—his claim of respect and consideration for the young. Hasten not on to the "nurture and admonition" of which he speaks till you have learned the meaning and the lesson of these words

that might fitly be written over every nursery and school-room in the land, "Provoke not your children to wrath."

In opposition to such a course as would thus warp and mar the minds of the children the Apostle, in the second place, enjoins that they are so be brought up, tended, or cultured "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Nurture may be taken as nourishment, that is the supply of all that is needed to make them grow in health, vigor and fruitfulness. Every living thing needs nourishment. In the cultivation of the land the nourishment of the plant is the chief concern. The selection of rich soil and the application of fertilizers point to that directly; but tillage and weeding have the very same object in view—to let water and air pass through the soil, and the roots spread far and near to gather nourishment, and to prevent the weeds from taking away a share of the air, dew, and nourishment from the plant. It is the same with animals. There is a direct supply of nourishment, and there are means taken to prevent waste and injury.

SO THE CHILD,

as an immortal spirit, needs nourishment or nurture as well as admonition, warning or advice to guard against loss or injury.

Plants hunger and thirst and they drink in by every rootlet and every leaf supplies of the nourishment provided. Hunger and thirst is the normal condition of every healthy animal, and the same is true of a child in its mental and spiritual nature, and it is of that higher nature our text speaks. The mind of the child seeks food, and education whether secular or religious, to be successful, must furnish some definite mental nurture to the child.

It need not be strong meat, but it must not be chaff that you give the little ones. It should of course be suited to various ages; but the point now insisted on is that it should be nourishing and consequently satisfying. A well-prepared lesson is as satisfying to the mind as a well-cooked meal to the body. It should not be too much compressed—a dry array of facts and figures; nor too much diluted—a few grains of thought amid a multitude of words. It should not be stale, but fresh and properly seasoned, and it will gain somewhat by being nicely served. Too much at a time, or too frequent supplies, or too highly seasoned dishes will produce