

THE BIBLE IN THE FAMILY.

Every person who believes that "the scriptures are given by inspiration," and who knows that "they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness," will deplore the treatment with which they meet in almost all our common schools. They are almost, if not altogether excluded, being regarded by not a few, amongst both teachers and trustees, as an unsuitable volume to be put into the hands of the young. These feelings arise from ignorance, prejudice, and a morbid fear of proslavery; as if the teacher, with the scriptures of truth in his hand, was the agent of the evil one, sent to sap the foundations of morality, and endanger the happiness of the children. And there are some sectarians that are to be found in almost every denomination of the external visible church of Christ, who seem to think (if we are to judge of their thoughts from their conduct), that the truths of the Bible cannot be taught without including *sectarianism*—hence they fear the methodism, the presbyterianism, or episcopalianism of their children; and on such flimsy pretexts the scriptures are excluded the common school. It comes then to a long important question, what is to be done in order to counteract such a state of feeling, and bring the scriptures to bear on the minds of the rising generation? We have reason to bless God that there are many means within the reach of all the lovers of the Bible, by which its truths may be brought to bear upon the youth of this land, and through them a better state of feeling respecting the Bible engendered in the community at large. The agents whose aid is essentially requisite in this work of love are, all parents who love the truth, and who desire the salvation of their children; all members, elders, and ministers of churches, who pray and labour for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. The spheres of operation are the family, the Sabbath school, and the Bible class. These are closely connected, and the labours in the one prepare for, and facilitate the duties of the other;—and they are fields in which there are space and work for all who wish to be workers together with God in the elevation and salvation of the young. Each of these deserves, and may obtain attention; but "the Bible in the family" may serve as introductory to the others.

Is there, then, a christian parent who doubts or disregards the solemn obligations which rest on him, and all, to read and study the scriptures? Has not God commanded us to search the scriptures? Are they not "the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him"? Are they not the means of salvation? Do they not contain God's method of salvation? Do they not tell us "how the guilty are pardoned—how the unholiness are made pure?" and how the weak are fitted for every duty and difficulty in life. They should, therefore, be the subject of our daily study. But rather than speak of the duty of reading the scriptures, we will attend to the time and the manner in which they should be read.

When should the Scriptures be read?

1. In every well-ordered Christian family, they will be read at least every morning and evening. Surely the family are then assembled to worship God, for they must have experienced, that "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and sing praises unto thy name, O Most High. To shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning and thy faithfulness every night." These are certainly very suitable seasons for such a service. The mind and body refreshed and invigorated by sleep, enjoy, in the morning, after the quiet repose of the past night, a calm state of feeling, which is congenial to our God and Father, and to the perusal of his holy word. Then the soul is in a proper state to be impressed with truth, and the Holy Spirit who takes of the things that are Christ's, and shews them to his people, will honour with his presence such an assembly, and bless his own ordinances for the comfort and edification of his people.—And what a preparative is such an exercise, to enter, with security, and some hope of success, the toils and trials of our worldly calling. Its truly benignant and sanctifying influences are certainly needed by the young, who are liable to some of the many snares and temptations, peculiar to their years. But if their minds are daily brought under the influence of scripture precept and example, they will gradually be strengthened and prepared to resist the temptations of the world and Satan. Again, at night, when the family are about to retire to rest, the scriptures should be read. There is no mental opiate so soothing to the soul, wearied with the duties or trials of life, as the precious truths of the word of God. At these stated periods this should be the exercise. If there were but one hour each day devoted to such an exercise, what improvement might we

not expect in the moral and religious condition of the rising generation.—Is it too much to say, that they would be characterised by knowledge, faith, and purity?—principles at too great a discount among their fathers at present.

2. The Sabbath, except so much as is to be taken up in the public exercise of God's worship, in the Sabbath School and Bible Class, or in works of necessity and mercy, should be devoted to the reading and study of the Scriptures. On this day the Christian parent should use all his influence in the family, that the Word of God may have free course and be glorified. The Sabbath has been set apart by God for the glorious purpose of holding converse with him, and this we cannot do if we are ignorant of his perfections and character; and we become properly acquainted with these, only when we know the truth. How pleasant and profitable must be the time spent on the Sabbath morning in Scripture reading, as well as in meditation and prayer? The family all assembled, each in his place, and with the word of God in his hand, cheerfulness, meekness and humility, visible in every face. They raise their hearts, as well as their voices, in singing some of the sweet songs of Zion; this sheds a holy peace through their souls, prepares the heart for the reception of the truth read, and for the profitable hearing of the truth preached. The Sabbath thus began and ended, will be experienced by all who engage in these services, to be both pleasant and profitable—holy of the Lord and honourable. But

11. How are the Scriptures to be read? and by whom?

We answer the last question first, and say they should be read by every member of the family who can read—by parents, children, and also by all domestics—every one should have a Bible; the word of God is now cheaper than many an unnecessary luxury, and every luxury should be sacrificed rather than permit any member of the family to be without the Scriptures—and each one should read in his or her turn. There are families in which the worship of God is steadily observed—where the father, as head of the family, conducts the whole of the service, with the exception of being joined in the song of praise to God. It is very desirable to think that the worship of God is even thus observed. But surely it would be better, if every member of the family would take some part in the sanctifying and ennobling service. The parents should always take the lead, and by their example, endeavour to inspire all their household with a regard for the Scriptures, and a strong desire to be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

Again, the stated chapter or portion should be carefully read. All the doctrines, precepts, promises, exhortations, or examples, which it contains, should be carefully observed, and pointed out by the father, who is presumed to be the person most capable of doing so; this should be done as briefly, and as impressively as possible. The truth thus read, may be expected to be followed by the blessing of God. Or, another mode might be followed with equal advantage, viz. after the portion of Scripture is read, the person who presides might examine the several members of the family on the truths which it contains, and thus their attention would be secured and their minds benefited by the exercise.—There are many helps, by the aid of which those who have not been accustomed to examine others on the Scriptures, might be enabled to perform this part of the service, with ease and propriety, and with advantage to others.

But the truth, besides being thus carefully read, should be read with faith and love. All its statements should be believed, as the truth most sure. Its warnings are for us, so also are its promises, doctrines and example, and if these are made the subjects of meditation, self-examination and prayer, the truths of the Scriptures may be expected to dwell in us in all wisdom, and will serve as a light to our feet and a lamp to our path.

D.

Miscellaneous.

After composing a sermon, Dr. Doddridge frequently embodied the leading ideas in a hymn. In many instances, the sermon has been lost, while the hymn remains—a noble monument of the exalted devotion manifested by its author. The subjoined hymn embodies the argument of a sermon now lost, on 1 Peter ii. 7.

Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to my ear,