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*Thoughts on religious
education and early piety*

William Swan Plumer

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"JUST AS THE TWIG IS BENT THE TREE INCLINES."

John S. Taylor, New York.

THOUGHTS

ON

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

AND

EARLY PIETY.

BY**REV. WILLIAM S. PLUMER.**Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia.

NEW-YORK:**JOHN S. TAYLOR,***Theological and Sunday School Bookseller,***BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL, CORNER OF PARK ROW AND NASSAU-STREET,
OPPOSITE THE CITY HALL.**

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1836.

D. Fanshaw, Printer.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

- I. Importance of the subject of Education.**
- II. Education—what it is.**
- III. Religious Education.**
- IV. Rules for a Religious Education.**
- V. Early Piety possible.**
- VI. Motives to Fidelity in Religious Instruction.**
- VII. Cases of Early Piety.**
- VIII. Conclusion.**

THOUGHTS
ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
AND
EARLY PIETY.

I. The importance of the subject.

These United States contain at this time not far from five millions of children and youth, whose characters are yet capable of being materially modified. And before the children of this generation shall have acted their parts in the world and been gathered to their fathers, there will be in the nation more than ten millions. The present juvenile population of the world is not less than three hundred millions. Wherever there are men, there are children. If therefore any ask a reason for inviting their attention to the subject of measures suited to benefit the young,

we point them in our own land to an army as great as that which Xerxes led across the Hellespont, and in all parts of the earth to a still more immense throng, more than thrice as vast as all the host of known stars that twinkle in the wide expanse of heaven. We then open our Bibles, and there we read that each of these little ones has a soul as deathless as the Divinity by which it exists—that sun and moon and stars shall be dissolved and pass away—but that no soul shall ever be annihilated. We read further, and learn that by divine appointment life is the seed-time for eternity; so that what a man sows here he shall reap eternally; and our impressions of seriousness are deepened. But when we learn that childhood is generally the seed-time of life, seriousness rises into solemnity. We conclude there is much at stake.

It ought never to be forgotten that children may die. Philip of Macedon required one to cry thrice every day in his hearing—

“Philip, thou art mortal.” It would be well if even Christian parents and people would remember often that the young are mortal. It would be rather curious than wise to affect to discover what proportion of the young die at the several stages of their early existence. Yet all must acknowledge the number to be great. Now, all who die when young, being immortal, go either to heaven or to hell. Respecting such as die in early infancy, we know that they are in the hands of a just, holy, wise and good God, who has in his blessed word encouraged us to hope that they go to his bosom ; and, in the case of the children of believers, has justified very strong hopes. But respecting all, who are old enough to understand God’s revealed will in the moral law and the plan of salvation, the Scriptures do require a regeneration *whose fruits shall be manifest to man*. Tens of thousands of children and youth go to eternity every day, who are of such an age as that they cannot be saved without heartily embracing the

Savior. If they have not early piety, they have no piety for ever and ever. Every child, therefore, that comes into the world, may justly be regarded as a comet which has just appeared. Its orbit is undescribed. Its course and the length of time it will be visible are unknown. But whether it shall be a wandering star for ever and ever in the blackness of darkness, or whether it shall shine in the firmament of God above, may soon be unalterably determined. No wonder then that those who love the race of man should attach great importance to all that may decide the eternal weal or wo of a deathless spirit. Nor ought it to be forgotten that the intellectual growth of the rising generation, in this and many countries, is without a parallel in the history of the world. The truth of this remark does not confine it even to Christian nations. This intellectual growth will probably increase with every successive generation, until the child shall commonly die a hundred years old. But should the

heart of this intellectual race be left uncultivated, the destiny of our country, and of the world, will be in the hands of a frantic giant, and the world

Will get drunk on blood,
To vomit crime.

And the overflowing scourge of infuriate passions, exciting unwonted efforts of unsanctified intellect, will fill the earth with "the reign of terror." Nor will it possess in itself the power of rectifying its own disorders. There is nothing even in vigorous intellect capable of controlling, much less subduing wicked propensities. To the nation that neglects religious education, and cares not for early piety, we may prophetically say, as the Master did to Peter, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."

II. Education.

To educate, is to direct and strengthen something which admits of modification and growth. To educate a member of the human family, is to guide and invigorate the nature of such a being. The term education is applied to the body, and then is denominated physical education. The excellence of a physical education consists in its imparting to its subject a sound and vigorous body with such animal habits as are likely to continue to it for a long time health and strength. The education of the social qualities of human nature is perhaps still more difficult and important. From his whole nature it is entirely manifest that man was formed for society. The present state of the world obliges a large portion of the human family to live in society, whether willing or not. Earth is too small to admit of a vast wilderness with the unbroken silence of ages to each of its inhabitants, were they disposed to the life

of a recluse. Therefore, to train men for mingling with men, by cherishing one class of sentiments and restraining another, polishing what is rude and eradicating what is vicious, is a necessary and useful work.

An intellectual education is the object of our schools, colleges, seminaries and universities. The best mode of accomplishing it is a matter over which there rests a thick cloud of uncertainty. No man, however, ought rashly to propose a substitute for existing systems. Of one thing there is no doubt, and that is, that devices, the intention of which is to effect a material abbreviation of existing systems, ought instantly to be rejected.

Both the direct and indirect influence of these several branches of education on each other, and on our moral nature, is very great. There are many and important truths, which no intellectual being, under brutish sentiments, can ever properly apprehend. Nor can a body full of feebleness, disease and de-

rangement, generally endure long continued and successful mental operation. But it is beside our purpose to say more on these subjects in this discussion. The allusion to them must be sufficient.

III. Religious Education.

We come now to the subject of religious education. Wherein does it consist? Paul, in speaking of it, says, "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And Solomon calls it a "training of them up in the way they should go." If we must train them up and bring them up, we certainly have much more to do than to let them come up or grow up. A child merely fed, and clothed, and left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame.

One of the first lessons to be taught a child, is submission to just authority, the authority

of the parent. It is most painful to see how many children are permitted, even at an early age, to become headstrong, turbulent, selfwilled, and ungovernable, except as brute beasts. Some parents even seem pleased at exhibitions of childish disobedience. All such dispositions, however feeble, are the germs of future faction, rebellion, treason, and outlawry. So important did God regard the principle of submission to parents, that he at one time connected with it a pledge of long life, and ordained that in this respect the incarnate Savior should set us an example, which closed not at the age of twenty-one, but lasted until he was thirty years old. He "was subject unto his parents," says Luke, 2: 51.

Inculcate on your children the genuine principles of modesty and self-distrust. It is the shame of the age in which we live, that so many young persons, swollen with self-conceit, perpetually dogmatize. They possess the forwardness and unblushing confi-

dence of the man of fifty years of age, without the caution and mellowness of character derived from age and experience. Hence the impudence, the height of pretension, the boldness of assertion, combined with most unworthy self-complacency, which meet us every where. Indeed, many persons seem to regard such modesty as that exhibited by Joseph, David, or Jeremiah, ruinous to their children, and inconsistent with the splendor and magnificence of carriage to which their birth and circumstances have destined them. The consequence is, that children "think of themselves more highly than they ought to think." They are, in their own estimation, men and women before they enter their teens, and they are in fact children even after. Improvement cannot be expected in such cases. The learned need not a teacher. Genuine modesty is fundamental in all solid and valuable improvements, whether of intellect or heart.

Teach your children patience, self-denial,

and equanimity. To do this effectually, they must not be indulged in all, or in half their wishes. Wisely discriminate, and, so soon as practicable, teach them to discriminate between lawful, and praiseworthy, and innocent desires on the one hand, and those which are whimsical, irregular and blameworthy on the other. A wish may not always be gratified because it is not unlawful. All lawful things are not expedient or useful. It is incalculably important for all persons to learn in early life, what they must learn sooner or later, that enjoyment cannot keep pace with desire, that loss and pain must be endured, that, for the sake of a higher good, self-denial must be exercised, and that, in the whole of life, a meek and quiet spirit is an ornament of invaluable excellence. Quietly to bear a defeat of purpose, and meet successful opposition without discomfiture, is to be dignified and free from some most distressing emotions.

Educate your children to habits of indus-

try in some lawful calling. It is hoped the time is nearly past when the expectation of patrimonial wealth will be considered as in the least justifying the plea of indolence. Otherwise a patrimony is but a curse. For he who is not industriously employed in something lawful and profitable, will be the minister of evil to himself and others. It is a just saying, and for centuries believed by the wisest men, that "an idle man's brain is the devil's workshop." So fraught with evil is lack of full employment, that the wise of every age have feared to make the experiment. "Pride, fullness of bread and abundance of idleness,"* were the sources of all the corruption, and crime, and utter ruin of Sodom. So much is God opposed to this sin, that in the benevolent arrangements of the blessed Gospel it is ordained that "if any will not work, neither shall he eat.†" Who then can, but at imminent hazard and amazing guilt, indulge either himself or others in a course, the na-

* Ez. 16 : 40. † 2 Thess. 3 : 10.

tural fruit of which is ruin here and wrath hereafter?

The strictest sobriety and entire temperance must enter into every valuable system of moral training. A vast proportion of the race of drunkards, who are the gazing-stock of devils, were initiated into the horrid mysteries of the art before they were dismissed from the nursery. And no doubt but the vast majority of them became fond of the poison before they left the paternal roof. Moderation in eating is no less a duty. Gluttony is a gross and beastly sin, punishing its perpetrator in time and eternity. Even an approach to it is a shame. A constant and vigorous restraint in these two particulars will be felt in other branches of moral discipline. He who would be crowned with the emblems of mastery must be temperate in all things. He must prefer the rational to the animal, and the spiritual to both, if he would subserve the great interests of his high destiny.

Imbue the minds of children with the most sacred regard to truth. Next to the idler, the liar is perhaps the most hopeless of all people in a Christian land. He, who becomes a habitual liar, loses the handle to his conscience, and no reasoning can get hold of him. The truth falls on his mind, but instantly rebounds. To inspire a horror of lying and a love of truth is not easy. Man is naturally a liar. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."* A proneness to practice deceit and deny true charges of criminality, is one of the earliest and strongest symptoms of depravity. Yet it must be eradicated. Nor will a wise parent spare any pains or expense to inculcate the love of truth. Lord Holland, the elder, had near his residence a massive stone wall. Having determined to remove it by the explosion of gunpowder, he promised his son Charles James, that he should be present

* Ps. 58 : 3.

when the wall should be blown up. The time arriving when it was most convenient to proceed with the work, and Charles James not being at home, the father forgot his engagement and had the wall demolished. The child returning, found his hopes disappointed, and expressed his regret. The father, that he might set an example of strict obedience to truth, ordered the wall to be rebuilt and again blown up. It was done. This circumstance made a deep impression on the mind of the child. Had a different course been pursued, the world might have felt the consequence to this day, and Charles James Fox might have been a contemner of all virtue.

Once, while the Rev. Robert Hall was spending an evening at the house of a friend, a lady, who was there on a visit, retired, that her little girl of four years old might go to bed. She returned in about half an hour, and said to a lady near her, "She is gone to sleep. I put on my night-cap and lay down by

her, and she soon dropped off." Mr. Hall, who overheard this, said, "Excuse me, madam: do you wish your child to grow up a liar?" "O dear, no Sir! I should be shocked at such a thing." "Then bear with me while I say, you must never act a lie before her: children are very quick observers, and soon learn that that which assumes to be what it is not, is a lie whether acted or spoken." This was uttered with a kindness which precluded offence, yet with a seriousness that could not be forgotten.

A tendency to falsehood is so deep a current, that in the Bible the whole of depravity seems to be summed up in a lie.* God has also most clearly declared the spirit of falsehood to be an utter disqualification for heaven. "He that loveth or maketh a lie" and "all liars, shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Even the habit of willful exaggeration in narrative is but willful lying. Never permit your child

* Ps. 62: 9.

to depart from the truth for any purpose—not even for the sake of a jest. It will defile the mind.

Educate your children to the exercise of all that is liberal, and generous and frank in sentiment, speech and behavior. Teach them that bigotry, and selfishness, and stinginess, and all narrowness of feeling, are among the objects most accursed of God, as well as spoken against, however practiced, by men. That you may effect the object, call into exercise, as often as possible, sentiments of liberality and generosity. Occasions are not wanting, in which this may be advantageously done. In the matter of charitable donation, let them understand that they are to give out of their own earnings or savings, and not from money just received from you for the particular purpose. Otherwise you will but teach them to be generous with other people's property.

Train your children to acts of humanity and mercy. There is a sort of tenderness

much in vogue at the present day, which weeps over misery and pities distress as portrayed by a novelist, but which turns away from real suffering and present wretchedness with a coldness that is as chilling as the northern tempest of winter. All humane and tender feelings are often obliterated by practices which many consider unworthy of a moment's regard. That great tyrant Domitian spent much of his time in catching flies and killing them with a bodkin. So mighty was this practice in hardening his heart and blunting his sensibilities, that soon he was prepared for any cruelty which his vices might suggest.

“There was once a boy who loved to give pain to every thing that came in his way, over which he could get any power. He would take the eggs from the mourning robin, and torture the unfledged sparrow. Cats and dogs, the peaceable cow, and the faithful horse, he delighted to worry and distress. He was told that such deeds were wrong. An

excellent lady with whom he lived used to warn and reprove him for his evil conduct. But he did not reform. When he grew up, he became a soldier. He was never sorry to see men wounded and blood running upon the earth. He became so wicked as to lay a plan to betray his country and sell it into the hands of the enemy. But he was discovered, and fled. He never dared to return to his native land, but lived despised and died miserably in a foreign clime. Such was the end of the cruel boy who loved to give pain to animals. His native city is ashamed of his memory. His name was Benedict Arnold."

Inculcate on your children a becoming respect for their superiors, and especially a reverence for the aged. The day in which we live is strongly marked by sad deficiencies here. It is too common to hear children and youth accosting the aged in terms so disrespectful and familiar as to inflict severe pain on all whose sense of propriety is not

utterly obtuse. Things were not always thus, to the same extent. Nor will they always thus continue. As mankind shall return to their allegiance to God, and "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, even as the light of seven days," there will be an amelioration. The truth is, that however unworthily of their age old people may act, or however low may be their rank in society, we ought never to forget that there is a degree of respect due to grey hairs alone. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God. I am the Lord."* Much more is "the hoary head a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."† The aged pious ought to be treated with great respect and kindness. And as many usages and institutions in the United States have a great tendency to produce an opposite state

* Lev. 19: 32. † Prov. 16: 31.

of things, great vigilance and firmness are required on this point.

Bring up your children with principles and habits of candor, fairness, and undoubted integrity in their dealings with others. Rear not a family of sharpers, shavers, usurers, and speculators. Repress every rising of the spirit of cupidity. Let them know that God and good men abhor such courses. Cupidity being a part of human depravity, it is important to adopt all suitable measures to counteract its influence. To have been the parent of a race of greedy, miserly, close, niggardly children, is to have been a curse and a blot to your generation. Give to your children this motto, to be inscribed on the frontlet of each of them : "It is not necessary that I should be rich, or be keen in trade ; but it is necessary that I should be honest, and maintain an unimpeachable integrity of character."

Let the young be taught to cultivate great reverence for the name, word, people, wor-

ship, ordinances, and Sabbath of God. Let them know that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain." Teach them that the Bible is the book of God, and as such is to be received, studied, obeyed heartily and cheerfully. When you can with safety, point them to one and another whose lives accord with the evangelical standard, and let them know that there are living cases of genuine piety, and that God yet has witnesses on the earth. Let them know, too, that there are excellent people in other branches of the Christian church besides that to which you belong. Let them know also, that God's house is different from other places, and demands special gravity and seriousness of deportment. Let them be present at the administration of the sacraments, and take pains to have them understand their solemn nature and spiritual meaning. See to it that they "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," not profaning it in any manner. A very large proportion of that class of

miserable beings who have fallen victims to public justice in Christian countries, in detailing the steps and progress of their crimes, have testified, that so long as any regard for the Sabbath as a holy day remained to them, they were restrained; but that this being all gone, they were prepared for any deeds to which their passions and their companions might invite or urge them.

Let children also be educated in a correct and adequate knowledge of the great doctrines of Christianity. Teach them that "there is none righteous, no not one;" that they and all men are wholly depraved, and "by nature the children of wrath"—without the image of God—destitute of any holiness—perverse in will, and strangers and aliens from the God of all hope. On this great doctrine let there be no doubt. Then tell them of the nature, necessity and agent of that great work to be wrought in them, denominated in Scripture, Regeneration. Teach them that religion is a reality, and that it is

altogether
spiritual, not consisting in forms and observances, however numerous or painful. Explain to them the nature, objects, author and importance of the Christian graces. Leave them not in ignorance of the ground and method of a sinner's acceptance before God, and that it is solely in virtue of Christ's obedience and death that we can be pardoned and receive the adoption of sons of God.

These instructions will be but feeble in their operation, unless parents statedly and frequently pray with and for their children. A child ought not to be able to remember the time when God was not statedly worshiped in its father's house. There are, too, many *occasions* when it is proper and profitable to retire with one or more of our children to a secret place, and there pray with and for them. They also ought to be taught to pray in secret and alone, not merely agreeably to some form of sound words, but in words of their own selection in view of their wants. Even before they can read, they may learn

suitable expressions of religious worship, and may be told that God's ear is as open to their cry as to that of the aged.

Natural and revealed religion both seem to unite in urging on parents the solemn dedication of their children to God, in secret, in the family, and in the house of God. The modes of this dedication parents must determine for themselves. We venture nothing in asserting that parental piety would feel its privileges very painfully abridged, were it denied this one of casting all its cares upon the Lord, and especially this heaviest of cares, the salvation of children.

We close this chapter by the following illustrations of the power of education.

A. was born in the county of ———. His parents were wealthy, intelligent and honest. His father early formed the purpose of making him a great man: He bought him a pony and mounted him, booted and spurred, to ride when and where other boys walked. A. soon betrayed a supercilious turn of mind,

for which he was neither corrected nor re-proved. Before he was sixteen he was often absent to a late hour, and was not required to give any account of himself. At an early age he married a lovely girl. Soon her heart began to break. A. became openly abandoned—was unkind to his wife—threatened the life of his father—was imprisoned—obtained a release—became a swindler—committed larceny, and is now serving his time as a convict in a penitentiary.

B. was born of poor, but industrious, honest, and pious parents. From early infancy he was taught to honor his father and mother, and to regard all deception, and falsehood, and profanity as dreadful. He was early taught to labor with his hands, to endure hardship, patiently to bear losses and privations, to read the Bible, to reverence the Sabbath and house and people of God. In an obscure neighborhood, on a small plot of land, he spent all his boyhood, not unknowing, though unknown. His parents, though

poor, had a *few good* books. None others were allowed a place on their mantel. B. read these attentively and often. His love of knowledge was cultivated by his parents, until at last his desires for a more liberal education became irrepressible. He requested his parents to hear his story. He told them his plans, and they consented to his making the effort, though they could give him no assistance except by their most fervent prayers. Each of them blessed him in the name of the Lord and said, God speed you, my son. In ten years he had procured a liberal and thorough education, and had fitted himself for usefulness in one of the liberal professions; and in ten years more he rose to such eminence that he was brought out from his retirement and placed in one of the most important and conspicuous stations in our country, useful in the body politic, in the church, a friend of the poor, and the joy of a large and affectionate family. He is still as affable and easy of access as when he was a poor

boy. He still cherishes the fondest veneration for his parents. In a recent sickness, when enduring great pain, he expressed a firm and joyful confidence in the divine Redeemer. Behold the difference which education makes. But we are anticipating.

General Principles of conducting a Religious Education.

Having considered the matter of a Christian education, we come now to consider the manner of it. Success in the work will depend very much on the way in which we attend to it.

It may be stated in the first place, as of primary importance, that too great care cannot be had in avoiding the error of taking too much for granted, either as to the knowledge or virtues of the child. To have taught a child any truth at one time, is not conclusive evidence that it is acquainted with it now.

“Line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” is the scriptural rule and method of communicating religious instruction even to adults. How much more important then that the principle be duly regarded in reference to children, whose minds are weak, and whose power of attention is almost as nothing. A public examination of all the people in a given district would expose an amount of gross ignorance, even among those who had passed for intelligent and well-instructed people, which would be as surprising as it is painful. And it is absurd to say that any man knows more than he can communicate to others. Never forget that a little at a time, and often repeated, is the great secret of successful instruction in any branch of knowledge.

Let all parents also be careful lest they suppose their children more free from fault, and more given to commendable conduct, than is the fact. It is by no means decisive

evidence that a child is not guilty of any practice, because he speaks in strong terms of disapprobation of it in the presence of his parents. This is often done for the sole purpose of allaying suspicion in their minds. It is remarkable that even some good people will not believe, nor even kindly listen to the testimony of worthy and veritable neighbors respecting the misconduct of their children. At least they will allow the denial of the charges by their children to outweigh the statements of those who cannot ordinarily have any unworthy motive in making their statements. This is a sad exhibition of human blindness, weakness and folly. Many parents never give any thanks to him, who, in Christian honesty and love, at the risk of having many unkind feelings excited towards him, dares to notify them of the wickedness of their children when out of their presence. And many are even highly offended at such a course. Such offence is a sure token of coming wretchedness. Therefore never sup-

pose that your children will voluntarily let you know the worst parts of their conduct and the worst features of their character. You are partial, and have not, in many cases, the means of observation or detection.

In the next place, remember that the wisest of men, inspired by the all-wise God has united the "rod" with "reproof." It is readily granted that there may be a few, a very few, with whom the rod is not necessary. The Scriptures assert a general, not a universal truth. It is also conceded that a great deal of wicked severity is often exercised even by parents; and that in all cases of discipline with the rod, a sound discretion and sober caution are necessary. Perhaps nothing engenders more wickedness in the soul of a child than the rash, hasty, undue, and especially unmerited use of this mode of correction. It ought never to be forgotten that a government of unmixed severity and rigor never did and never can subdue the human soul into a state of ingenuous and affectionate

obedience. Parents may, and often do so chastise, as to alienate the affections and forfeit the confidence of their children. This is always done when the rod is used in passion. Now, although all we have admitted is true, yet the Bible principles on this subject will be found of perpetual excellence and applicability. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him."*

Some good writers strikingly illustrate this part of the subject by a very familiar allusion. Two coaches used to drive into New-Market from London, by a certain hour, at a time of strong competition. The horses of the coach which generally came in first had scarcely a wet hair. In the other, though last, the horses were jaded and heated to excess, and had the appearance of having made great efforts. The reader perhaps understands the cause of the difference. The first man did it all, of course, by the *reins*; the second,

* Prov. 22 : 15.

unsteady in himself, or unskillful in the reins, had induced bad habits, and then employed the *whip* ; but he could never cope with the other. So it will ever hold in all government. If obedience to the reins is found to be most pleasant in itself, and ever the road to enjoyment, then obedience will grow into a habit, and become, in fact, the choice of the party."

In impressing religious truth, the wise will always avail themselves of the love of narrative, which children in common with the race possess. God has been very merciful to our weakness in giving us so much of his will in the shape of narrative. No race of people have ever yet been found so degraded and stupid as to be incapable of being aroused by an interesting story. There are very few children so heedless and dull as to refuse attention to a short and touching statement of facts—such as abound in Scripture. The history of Joseph has never been surpassed in the history of mere mortals for thrilling in-

terest and moving simplicity. The points of morals and religion illustrated by it are numerous and important. God's anger at the sin of Sabbath-breaking is powerfully illustrated in the case of the man that gathered sticks on the Sabbath-day. The history of Achan is an awful warning against covetousness—that of Uzal against officious irreverence in matters of religion—that of Absalom against filial disobedience and rebellion, and that of Ananias and Sapphira against lying. Would you solemnly warn your child against a contempt for the aged and pious, especially those whose office demanded respect? Point them to the history of Elisha, how, as he was going to Bethel, "there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald-head; go up, thou bald-head—And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood and tare forty and two children of them."*

Most, if not all the doctrines and duties of

* 2 Kings, 2: 23, 24.

revealed religion, with the errors and vices opposed to them, may be thus forcibly and vividly impressed on them. And the manner of receiving being pleasant and even delightful, we may hope for the happiest effects. It is, therefore, not only wise, but solemnly obligatory on all who would teach the truth aright, to seize on any historical illustration of important truth, and convey instruction by it.

Let love reign in all your intercourse with your children. Especially be affectionate in every endeavor to impart instruction. In British courts the judge, when about to pronounce sentence, puts on a black cap, and in every respect the whole appearance of things is as gloomy as possible. Some parents in giving instruction, especially religious instruction, do very much the same thing. Their aspect is forbidding. Their manner is doleful and gloomy. Instead of making their children feel that a delightful service is about to be engaged in, they make them feel

as if something dreadful was about to be endured. This method is of course attended with most painful results. The child looks to the set time with instinctive dread. The opposite course wins the affections, engages the attention, enlists the energies, renders the exercise pleasant, and secures the most important benefits. An affectionate course secures confidence. The opposite course destroys it. Take an illustration of each course.

A. was the daughter of a venerable minister of the Gospel. Her parents taught her many useful lessons, and impressed them all with the warmth of a tender affection. They made her welfare their own, and thus taught her to make theirs her own. When A. was grown, she went to visit some friends in one of our larger cities. She was gay and giddy—full of life and fond of merriment. Yet she knew it would wound parental affection for her to attend any dancings or places of theatrical amusement. Nor did she conceal

her views of the impropriety of her attending them. Her young friends besought her, but she was firm to her purpose. At length they formed a plan to inveigle her. They agreed among themselves that on a given evening they would take a walk and go in the direction of the theatre; that A. should walk with young Mr. B. and that he should so manage as to let the rest of the company get far before, so as not to see them. It was done as agreed. The rest of the company entered the theatre. A. and her villainous escort walked till they came opposite to the theatre. B. turned to lead her in, but she refused. He told her that the rest had all gone in, and that if she would go in and remain but for half an hour, and should then wish to come away, he would with pleasure return with her. But she was unshaken in her resolution. At length he had the audacity to intimate that he must see the play, and did not think he could accompany her home. She replied that she was more safe in the street

alone, than in any company at a place which it was contrary to her principles to attend. She was about to return home alone, when his shame overcame his purposes of meanness, and he went with her. At the door of her lodgings she requested B. never to let her see his face again. She felt that not she alone, but her parents also were insulted. This event was perhaps not unimportant in deciding her whole future character. She became a mother in Israel, and an ornament of the Christian profession.

C. was also the child of pious parents. Her father was a venerable clergyman. In this family there was an austerity of manner that destroyed affectionate confidence. Indulgences were granted with an ill grace. Prohibitions were made in sternness. In this manner dancings and theatrical amusements were proscribed. C. brooked not these restraints. "She considered them inhuman. She used to make the necessary preparations for attendance at such assemblies, without

the knowledge of either of her parents ; and by various pretences found time for so doing. After her parents had retired to rest, which was usually early, she rose, went secretly out of the house, and partook of the forbidden amusement. By some means she entered the house again without detection ; and by a great degree of deceptive management kept it wholly concealed from her parents. God now left her to go on and choose her own ways. She at length married a young physician, handsome, gifted, and agreeable, but of most depraved principles. If it could be known in what particulars he was most depraved, it might be said, in those of all others the most lacerating to the feelings of a wife. Peace was a stranger in her dwelling. She was a prey to the most harassing suspicions. Every species of deception was practiced upon her by her abandoned companion, until he seemed to scorn the thought of deceiving, and threw off all restraint ; and such was the abject fear by which she was held in bond-

age, that the dread of offending him seemed to outweigh all other considerations."

Let it not be forgotten, however, that authority is a means of doing good, put into the hands of parents for the purpose of being employed when necessary. There can be no well-regulated family where it is not understood that authoritative displeasure will be incurred by not conforming to wholesome and established usages. God said of Abraham—"I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment."* Authority is a most solemn and important deposit in the hands of men. For the right use of it a very awful account must be given. Church history informs us of a truly pious and venerable minister, the father of two sons, both of whom he encouraged to enter the sacred office, and then took as his own assistants in his ministerial office. But they had

* Gen. 18 : 19.

no religion. They were selfish, wanton, and profligate. They brought all the services of religion into contempt. The very name of religion was offensive to the great mass of the people, on account of the wickedness of these young ministers. News of their evil deeds were reported to their father. Having over them all the authority of a parent, and of a superior in age and office, he might have corrected the abuses. But his course was marked with indecision and inefficiency. He satisfied himself with saying—"Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" Thus he gave them solemn warning, but used not his authority. He restrained them not. Therefore God summoned him to hear this awful sentence—"Them that honor me will I honor, and they

that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thy house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel : and there shall not be an old man in thy house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart : and all the increase of thy house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phineas ; in one day they shall die, both of them." Remember Eli.

Never on any account permit visitors, or elder children, or favorite servants, to interpose between you and the just exercise of authority over your children. Of course it is madness for one parent to contravene the authority of the other.

Having adopted an enlightened and scrip-

tural method of instruction and training, persevere in it. "Long patience" is necessary to him who would teach any class, and especially children. The seed sown may lie long before it will vegetate. The natural corruptible seed of vegetables has been known to grow after it had been buried for a century. How much more then may "the incorruptible seed, the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," lie buried long in the heart, and at last grow and bring forth abundantly. It is not uncommon for the Gospel to exert its power in arresting the ungodly, just at the time when hopes of their salvation are the least encouraged by outward appearances. One of the first effects of a presentation of law and obligation to an unrenewed soul, is the production of all manner of concupiscence. It is not decisive evidence that conscience has not power, or that truth is not operative, because a child seems more outbreking in sin, or more inclined to apparent levity. All this may be nothing

more than the mere whistling of the heart-smitten boy, passing through the tombs, and endeavoring to shake off the fear of sins, whose frightful ghosts haunt his guilty imagination. Paul never was so wicked as just before his conversion.

Select for your children suitable companions. Bad company is worse than none. In an important sense, parents ought to be the companions of their children. Yet it is not to be supposed that they will deem it proper, in ordinary cases, to exclude them from the society of all those whose age corresponds with their own. Yet bad children will as certainly corrupt their mates, as bad men will their fellows. All that the Bible says in regard to the influence of companions on adults, is fully applicable to children. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."*

A. was the son of worthy and pious parents. At an early age he manifested un-

* Prov. 13 : 20.

sual cleverness, and attracted considerable notice. Many sought to have him with them. Even many wild young men were won by his smartness, and by making presents to him and his parents they made his parents think them truly friendly. They succeeded in often having the little boy with them. They soon inflated him with a very high conceit of his own importance and capacity. They then fretted him until they had spoiled his temper, and made him ready at any time for a fight. They soon taught him to use profane language. He soon began to think the restraints of home were too strong, and he began to laugh at the religion of his parents. Before he was twelve years old, he had learned to play at cards, and to drink ardent spirits freely. His earthly course thenceforth was short, rapid, and downward. An early grave received him, but not until almost every vice had clustered on his character. His name is never mentioned in the parental abode without being followed by a

season of silence, and by deep sadness of countenance. "The companion of riotous men shameth his father."*

Supply your children with suitable books. When men who are now in middle life look back to the time of their childhood, and inquire what then composed juvenile libraries, they are surprised at the result. A few catechisms and divine songs, Janeway's Token for children, and a very few more such books, composed the only religious reading suitable for children, in the year 1800. Other books then put into the hands of children chiefly concerned fairies, giants, ghosts, villains, shipwrecks, and sundry other marvelous matters, both seductive and unprofitable. But at this time most valuable books, which cannot fail both to interest and to profit, can be had in almost any number. Parents have now *no* excuse for feeding the immortal mind with the stories of Goody Two-shoes and Jack the Giant-killer. And when children

* Prov. 28 : 7.

are more fully grown, books ought still to be *selected* for them. The floating novels of this and every other day are ruinous in their effects on character, inducing a wild and romantic tendency in the [mind, and unfitting the reader to see and feel things as they really exist. But the excellent publications of our American Sunday School Union, and our American Tract Society, are above all praise. Avail yourself of these advantages. The first named institution has for years published a little monthly periodical, entitled "The Youth's Friend," at the low price of twenty-five cents a year. Every little child ought to have the use of it. Its undoubted tendency is to elevate and ennoble character.

In whatever you undertake for the benefit of your children, be earnest and zealous. Heartless efforts never produce great results. Monica, the mother of Augustine, said "she had greater pain and travail that her son might be born again, than she had that he might be born." If your children discover

in you a coldness and languor when you are laboring for their spiritual welfare, they will assuredly receive the impression that it is a matter of very slight importance. If you wish them to feel, feel yourself. If you would engage them, you yourself must be engaged. Never forget that they are continually receiving impressions, and that the elements of character which they now possess, will soon be beyond your control, acquiring every day strength and confirmation, and likely ere long to exhibit a sturdiness of good or evil, of which you can now form but a faint conception. Therefore, "what your hand findeth to do, do it with your might."

Unite precept and example. Never omit either. If the precept be omitted, conscience will not be duly informed, and must grope her way in the dark. If the example be omitted, the impression will gain ground that the precept is not intended for practice. Little good will be accomplished by the lessons of the parent, to whom the child may in

truth say—"Physician, heal thyself." The conduct of the parent is the mirror before which the child does daily adjust its moral habiliments. "Tinder is not more apt to take fire, nor wax the impression of the seal, than youth to follow example." He who gives the precept, scatters the seed. He who adds example, ploughs it in. The difference between instruction by bare precept or mere example, and instruction combining both of these, is so manifest that it must have forced itself on all reflecting minds.

Cultivate in no way the mercenary principle. Never *hire* your child to do its *duty*. To substitute the reward for the motive, and make present advantage the determining influence, where truth, honor, or religion, all sacred and imperative, should decide, is to breed monsters in the moral world.

Beware of breaking the spirit of your child. Desperation never achieved any grand purpose, except an occasional deliverance from pressing emergency. But a broken-

spirited man never laid and executed a plan of any difficulty, and requiring patience and perseverance. God, in subduing the rebellious to his gracious government, has formed no part of his plan on the principle of vanquishing by intimidation, or of winning by destroying all mental elasticity. On the contrary, the flow of soul and the vigor of thought are as remarkable in regeneration as perhaps any thing else. The oil of gladness covers the whole person and garment of him who becomes the Lord's freeman. Of such value did the inspired apostle consider the natural sprightliness and rebounding of the young mind, that he left these solemn words—"Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged." Doddridge's paraphrase of this verse is—"And ye *fathers*, see to it that you *do not* so abuse the superiority of the relation, as, by a perverse and excessively severe conduct, *to provoke your children, [to wrath] lest they be discouraged* from attempting to please you, when it

shall seem to be an impossible task ; and be rendered unfit to pass through the world with advantage, when their spirits have been so unreasonably broken under an oppressive yoke in the earliest years of life."

Frequently direct the attention of your children to the operation of God's hand, both in his common and special providence. A narrow escape of death, the desolations of a tempest, the awful thunder, the vivid lightning, the sun, and moon, and stars, the ocean, the cold mantle of winter, the gay dress of spring, the seasonable industry of summer, the chilling damps of autumn, all afford occasions for profitable remark. It would much assist those parents whose manner of life makes their children acquainted with agriculture or horticulture, if they were familiar with some such treatise as Flavel's Husbandry Spiritualized. It is a principle well understood by all who thoroughly investigate the subject, that while stated lessons have some advantages, yet it is occasional

remarks that have peculiar penetration, and force, and permanence. Their suitability and connection with passing events give them great power.

But rest not satisfied with occasional efforts. Let the tenor of your conversation and intercourse with your children be such as continually to bring divine and eternal things before their minds. Some considerable portion of every Sabbath day ought to be sacred to this work. But bare Sabbath instruction will be apt to produce mere Sabbath Christians. He who feels the importance of religion, and knows the worth of souls, will be unwilling to keep silence except on the first day of the week. He, whose soul is fired with heavenly love, will rejoice to keep such a command as that in Deuteronomy, 6 : 6-9. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when

thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." These words most explicitly teach the duty of giving to divine truth the greatest prominence in our affections, conversation, and behavior. When the time shall arrive that "holiness to the Lord shall be written on the bells of the horses," it will be almost impossible for any to be so utterly thoughtless, even in early childhood, as to banish all concern about God, and salvation, and eternity.

Where it is practicable, parents do well to avail themselves of the advantages of a well regulated infant school. This is not the place to discuss what constitutes *such* a school. It is merely asserted that some are, and some are not well regulated. A large majority, however, are decidedly good in their effects. What is most remarkable in these schools is

the discrimination, thoroughness, and precision of the knowledge acquired in them. In these respects they are not inferior to any schools taught in the land. It is also true, that, as yet, these schools have not fallen under the influence of wicked men. The plans of education pursued in them are, as yet, friendly to piety. The cards and books used are not unchristian in their character, nor antichristian in their tendency. Whosoever enjoys the benefits of one of these nurseries, ordinarily has two or three years added to his intellectual and moral existence, which would otherwise have been spent in extreme imbecility, almost equal to a non-existence.

To infant schools let us add Sabbath schools. It shall be for a lamentation that so many, who have the care of children, so lightly esteem these blessed institutions. Sabbath schools afford the following benefits :

1. They supply a large and excellent library to all who are able to read.

2. They have a very decided and happy effect on the scholarship of their pupils. The mental improvement is marked and undoubted.

3. They enforce moral lessons, which parents teach at home, with great power and success. It may now be a question whether the great body of our efficient church members are not indebted to these schools for a large portion of their present character. But there will be no question of this kind in the year 1850.

But we cannot dwell on this subject. In aiding the cause of Sabbath Schools, you aid yourself in rearing your children up for usefulness in time, and for glory in eternity.

In all plans for the education of children, it is of special importance that there be harmony among those who give direction in the business. If the father wishes one thing, and the mother another, and the teacher a third, what but folly and misery can be expected? How important that parents and

teachers should all be pious. The piety of even one of the parents, though a good thing in itself, does yet often secure but little good to the children, where both the parents are not perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. The evils of such a state of things are pointed out in Bunyan's *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, in the Dialogue between *Attentive* and *Wiseman*.

Attentive. Had Mr. Badman any children by his wife?

Wiseman. Yes, seven.

Attentive. I doubt they were but badly brought up.

Wiseman. One of them loved its mother dearly, and would constantly hearken to her voice. Now that child she had the opportunity to instruct in the principles of the Christian religion, and it became a very gracious child. But that child Mr. Badman could not abide; he would seldom afford it a pleasant word, but would scold and frown upon it,

speak churlishly and doggedly to it; and though, as to nature, it was the most feeble of the seven, yet it oftenest felt the weight of its father's fingers. Three of his children did directly follow their father's steps, and began to be as vile as (in his youth) he was himself. The others that remained became a kind of mongrel professors, not so bad as their father, nor so good as their mother, but betwixt them both. They had their mother's notions and their father's actions, and were much like those you read of in the book of Nehemiah: "These children spake half in the language of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jew's language, but according to the language of each people."

Attentive. What you say in this matter is observable; and if I take not my mark amiss, it often happeneth after this manner where such unlawful marriages are contracted.

Wiseman. It sometimes doth so; and the reason with respect to their parents is this: Where the one of their parents is godly, and

the other ungodly and vile, they strive for their children when they are born. The godly parent strives for the child, and, by prayers, counsel, and good examples, labors to make it holy in body and soul, and so fit it for the kingdom of heaven ; but the ungodly would have it like himself, wicked, and base, and sinful ; and so they both give instructions accordingly. Instructions did I say ? Yea, and examples too, according to their minds. Thus the godly, as Hannah, is presenting her Samuel unto the Lord ; - but the ungodly, like them that went before them, are for offering their children to Moloch, to an idol, to sin, to the devil, and to hell. Thus one hearkeneth to the law of their mother, and is preserved from destruction ; but as for the other, as their father did, so do they. Thus did Mr. Badman and his wife part some of their children betwixt them ; but as for the other three, that were as it were mongrels, betwixt both, they were like unto those that you read of in Kings : *They heard*

the Lord, but served their own idols. They had, as I said, their mother's notions, and I will add, profession too ; but their father's lusts, and something of his life. Now, their father did not like them, because they had their mother's tongue, and the mother did not like them, because they had still their father's heart and life ; nor were they indeed fit company for good or bad. The good would not trust them, because they were bad ; the bad would not trust them, because they were good ; viz. the good would not trust them, because they were bad in their lives, and the bad would not trust them because they were good in their words ; so they were forced with Esau to join in affinity with Ishmael ; to wit, to look out a people that were hypocrites like themselves, and with them they matched, and lived, and died.

Attentive. Poor woman, she could not but have much perplexity.

Wiseman. Yea, and poor children, that ever they were sent into the world, as the

fruit of the loins and under the government of such a father as Mr. Badman.

Attentive. You say right; for such children lie almost under all manner of disadvantages; but we must say nothing, as this also is the sovereign will of God.

Wiseman. We may not by any means object against God; yet we may talk of the advantages and disadvantages that children have, by having for their parents such as are either godly or the contrary.

Attentive. You say right, we may so; and pray now, since we are about it, speak something in brief unto it; that is, unto this, what advantage those children have above others that have for their parents such as indeed are godly.

Wiseman. So I will; only I must first premise these two or three things:

1. They have not the advantage of election for their father's sake.
2. They are born as others, the children of wrath, though they come of godly parents.

3. Grace comes not unto them as an inheritance, because they have godly parents. These things premised, I shall now proceed.

1. The children of godly parents are the children of many prayers ; they are prayed for before, and prayed for after they are born ; and the prayers of a godly father and godly mother do much.

2. They have the advantage of what restraint is possible, from what evils their parents see them inclined to ; and that is a second mercy.

3. They have the advantage of godly instruction, and of being told which be, and which be not, the right ways of the Lord.

4. They have also those ways commended unto them, and spoken well of in their hearing, that are good.

5. Such are also what may be kept out of evil company, from evil books, and from being taught the way of swearing, lying, and the like, as Sabbath-breaking, and mocking

at good men and good things, and this is a very great mercy.

6. They have also the benefit of a godly life set before them doctrinally by their parents, and that doctrine backed with a godly and holy example ; and these are very great advantages. Now all these advantages the children of ungodly parents want ; and so are more in danger of being carried away with the error of the wicked. For ungodly parents neither pray for their children, nor do, nor can they, heartily instruct them. They do not after a godly manner restrain them from evil, nor do they keep them from evil company. They are not grieved at, nor yet do they forewarn their children to beware of such evil actions that are an abomination to God and to all good men. They let their children break the Sabbath, swear, lie, be wicked, and vain. They commend not to their children an holy life, nor set a good example before their eyes. No, they do in all things contrary ; estranging their

children what they can from the love of God and all good men, so soon as they are born. Therefore it is a very great judgment of God upon children, to be the offspring of base and ungodly men.

In all endeavors to train up your children for usefulness and happiness, never forget that the Holy Spirit alone can render your labors effective, and your instructions permanently useful. God does so order things as most impressively to teach us that his Spirit is the sole agent of effectual and abiding good to the soul of man. Doubtless one fruitful source of the inefficiency which has crippled so many efforts for the salvation of men, is to be found in the low estimate had of the necessity and glory of the Spirit's power in making the truth effectual. Those who honor the Holy Ghost by a christian reliance on his saving energy, shall be honored of him by an abundant blessing on their well directed labors for the salvation of others, whether they be old or young. On

the other hand, those who despise the Holy Ghost shall be lightly esteemed, and their works shall be as unfruitful and as unstable as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor. It is not proposed to carry this discussion further than to say that the Holy Spirit shall be given to them who ask his almighty aid, while those who ask not, receive not, and the bad will be consumed in vain, yea, the bel-lows will be burned for naught.

IV. Early Piety Possible.

Begin Early.—This is the true doctrine, let our views of early piety be what they may. None who will be benefited by these pages will question the susceptibility of the youthful mind to receive impressions which may at some time be matured into a saving change. There are habits of great importance to children, which cannot be acquired too soon. Such are habits of obedience in

many things. What parent does not think his child as capable of understanding his meaning in many things, when but a few weeks old, as is the dog that lies on the hearth? You may therefore teach it some things which it is important for it to know, even when very young. This is the training which it receives as an animal. Intellectual and moral training will not so soon be possible. Yet defer not needlessly. First impressions are lasting. See to it that they be desirable. Impressions respecting good and evil your child will have. Let them be according to truth.

It not unfrequently occurs, that on the introduction of a subject we discover in ourselves strong prejudices against it. Sometimes we cannot trace them to their origin and sometimes we can. It is not impossible to find out sufficient causes for all the apparent aversion of many minds towards the subject now presented. It may be asserted as a first principle, that the truly pious do

heartily rejoice in the progress of true religion in all cases, if they do but discover that it is true religion, and not something else in the disguise of piety. And yet it cannot be denied that there are views and feelings among many good people, respecting this matter, whenever introduced, that are exceedingly painful to think upon.

Now, it is not impossible to trace these prejudices to causes which have been in operation for many years.

One of them has been the manner in which the conversions of very young persons have been spoken of from the pulpit and through the press. How often has it of late years been announced, that some great and important discoveries have been made on the subject, and that hitherto the church has been in great ignorance and error. The very pompousness of the announcements which have been made in many places, was sufficient to disgust the less spiritual with the whole subject, and to create strong fears in the minds

of the pious. The following are but samples of what has been published in the newspapers respecting the doings of some in transient labors among children. "On examination, mothers obtained comfortable evidence for more than sixty of their children, that they are born of the Spirit of God"—"Upwards of fifty children were converted during our meeting"—"The result of our meeting was the hopeful conversion of more than one hundred children." To "those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern good and evil," such statements are exceedingly painful. How different this course is from that taken by a patriarch in Israel, very many of whose grandchildren, and other young friends, were professing to have rested their hope in Christ, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Instead of any confident assertions respecting them, he seemed to be unusually solemn, and uncommonly engaged in prayer. When some one said to him that these things must make him

very happy, he replied—"Wait! Let us see what sort of fruit they will bear. If that be good, we can then all rejoice together."

Another ground of prejudice is the very injudicious treatment which in most cases those receive who at a very early period profess religion. They are spoiled with attentions. Paul charges Timothy not to bring forward any young convert, however many his years in life, to the conspicuous work of a religious teacher, and assigns this remarkable reason; "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Well would it have been for the honor of religion if the principle here inculcated had been duly regarded in every department of the church. Who has not been pained at seeing children and young persons who had professed religion, paraded in public as somewhat remarkable, their sayings repeated, and their services called for in conducting prayer, and sometimes even exhortation, among their superiors in age, and wisdom, and piety?

Even admitting one to have some true piety, such treatment must induce something unlovely in the whole appearance, unless the grace afforded be without a parallel. How lovely and instructive to mothers the example of the most highly favored among women, who did not repeat the sayings of her Son, but hid them in her heart.* Go and do likewise.

Then, again, it is admitted that there are but few, very few, examples of unquestionable piety among very young persons. The fact that many of those, who profess religion early, do also die early, seems to leave the matter in a light but little calculated to convince the skeptical. And because the examples of undoubted piety are *few*, some make the inference that there are *none*; and believing that there are none, they do not pray and labor hoping to witness very happy or decisive effects ~~on~~ *on* their children. Indeed many seem to be fairly under the influence

* Luke, 2 : 51.

of the practical judgment that very early piety governing the *lives* of children is unattainable. Hence the total absence, in many cases, of all direct and earnest efforts for the salvation of the young.

The regulations of families and of schools are also not unfrequently and powerfully opposed to early conversions. A. had a little friend who, at nine years of age, confessed himself ready to serve God at any hazard. The children in his family laughed him to scorn, and knocked at his door when he retired for devotion. And at school his companions would form a circle around him, and shout—"Oh! here is a little Christian." This course lasted one whole summer. Is it not strange that he was yet able in meekness to bear their taunts, and not withdraw his testimony nor let go his confidence? Yet who cannot see how utterly unfriendly such a situation must be to the maintenance and growth of any thing like the spirit of devotion? Let parents, and guardians, and teach-

ers, therefore, see to it, that every arrangement be such as not to favor an organized system of persecution ; but on the contrary to afford every facility and encouragement to the youngest for the formation of devotional habits.

These general impressions are in many cases very strong and deeply rooted. So true is this, that all the strength of a scriptural argument is necessary to remove them.

Let it be stated that no one has ever yet attempted to justify these general views, from any want of adaptation in scripture truth to affect even a very youthful mind, nor from any sober interpretation of scripture statements declaring the thing impossible. On the contrary, the Scriptures afford many instances of plain teaching directly to the contrary. Let us look at a few of them. " Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength."* The intelligent reader remembers that the Savior when on

* Ps. 8: 2.

earth quoted these words, and declared them fulfilled even in his day. Yes, the little ones can by their hallelujahs "still the voice of the adversary." "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 19 : 14. It is promised that in the latter day glory "the child shall die an hundred years old."* That is, the child, in that age, shall be as far advanced in knowledge and in grace as in other ages were ordinarily attained by those who arrived at the great age of a hundred years. Indeed the tenor of Scripture decidedly encourage us to regard children as suitable subjects of piety. Such passages as Matthew, 18 : 4, and 1 Cor. 14 : 20, do not easily admit of any tolerable interpretation on any other supposition. All admit that children may be and are subjects of the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit before they arrive at years of understanding, and that thus they who die in early infancy are

* Isaiah, 65 : 20.

fitted for heaven. Why then should it be thought impossible for God to renew and save one whose mind had advanced to the first grades of intellectual and rational exercise? It is not contended that true religion will make men and women of children. It will rather maintain in them every thing that properly belongs to childhood. Let them retain all their feebleness, and diffidence, and feeling of dependence on others, and fondness for retirement from public gaze. All we contend for is, that they be encouraged to carry with them, as children, the spirit of piety.

V. Inducements to do our Duty.

It ought to be a sufficient inducement to all to do their duty, simply to know that such is the will of God. Now, in the matter of educating our children, the will of God is clearly derivable from two sources. No one looks at those little nestlings, able only to open

their mouths and make a feeble noise, and then sees the parent pair day by day supplying them with food, and then turns away and doubts whether it is according to the will of a wise and good God that such should be the course of things among the feathered tribes. So our Creator, by bringing children into the world in a state of great bodily, intellectual, and moral weakness and dependence, has with great clearness, and under solemn sanctions, enjoined it upon us to seek their good in these respects. If we will not do it, we must sin against instinct, against nature, against parental affection. The tenderest and strongest impulses of parental love must be despised ere we can leave our offspring without suitable training.

Nor is the *word* of God less clear. It utters its dreadful anathemas on those who provide not for the bodily wants of those whom Providence has cast helpless and dependent upon us, and pronounces them worse than infidels. It then goes on and speaks of the incompa-

rable value of the soul above the body, and utters awful words about soul-murder, whether by violence or neglect. So that if he is worse than an infidel who lets his children starve, what shall we think of him who lets them endure a famine of the word of God, and perish miserably even when salvation is freely offered, but he, when he heareth, refuses to say, Come? Passages of Scripture already quoted, with many others of common occurrence to the reading eye, declare God's will in the most clear and positive manner.

God has also made great promises on this subject. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* Again—"Withhold not correction from thy child; for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."† "The rod and reproof give wisdom."‡ The general tenor of these promises is, that education shall accomplish

* Prov. 22 : 6. † Prov. 23 . 13, 14. ‡ Prov. 29 : 15.

its objects. A good education wisely conducted, shall ordinarily result in the formation of a desirable character. Thus shall a proper religious education save the soul of your beloved child from sin and from hell, and let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins, which otherwise would have flashed confusion in his face at the judgment day, and after the shame of that day, everlasting contempt to all eternity. Therefore if God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is glorified in the salvation, and dishonored in the perdition of a soul, labor for the salvation of your children. And if they become pious at an early period, they will escape those vices and courses of life which are so besotting and so full of misery to all who are subject to them. It is proper here to make some remarks as to the success of labors in behalf of the very early piety of children.

In proof of the capacity of little children

for savingly receiving religious truth, it may be observed that perhaps no one will object to the following statement, viz. that it requires no more mental capacity to receive than to reject the Gospel, to obey than to disobey, to be pious than to be wicked. Should any one oppose this statement, we have no contest with him, but would refer him for proof to the well authenticated narratives of the religious experience of many, whose memoirs have been published by our American Sunday School Union, and American Tract Society.

VI. Cases of Early Piety.

The following little incident may illustrate the capacity of children for understanding religious truth. A little boy not four years old, and known to the writer of these thoughts, was some time since sitting alone, and seemed to be absorbed in solemn thought.

At length he burst into tears and sat and wept.

When asked what troubled him, he replied, "I am afraid that when I die I shall not live any more." Here was an infant mind grappling with intense effort with the high mystery of immortality, and shuddering as it looked down into the dark and fathomless abyss of annihilation. When assured by those who had never deceived him, that God, in whose hands our breath is, had said we should live after death, he became calm and tranquil.

In order to settle the question of the practicability of early piety, God hath recorded in holy Scripture some very striking examples. Jeremiah and John the Baptist were sanctified from the womb. Samuel, the prophet, and Josiah, the king, and Timothy, Paul's son in the Gospel, were pious at an early age, and one of them when a mere child.

It is not thought improper here to bring

before the attention of the reader well authenticated narratives of the religious character of two little children who have lived and died in our own day. They are but specimens of what God can do. They are here inserted not only to rescue these interesting portions of the history of redemption from speedy oblivion, but also because the parents or grand-parents, one or more, are still living, and one well and favorably known to a large circle of pious friends.

The first is the case of Ann Maria Henry, who died at Ballston, N. Y. aged eleven years and nine months. She was the daughter of the late Reverend Thomas Charlton Henry, D. D., of Charleston, South Carolina.

In the character, life, and death of this young disciple of the Lord Jesus, there was much of deep and peculiar interest. The subject of many and fervent prayers, and trained in the nurture of the Lord, she with the first developements of an early mind gave evidence of being a child of grace.

She looked forward to the ensuing communion Sabbath, with an earnest desire and joyful anticipation of uniting herself in a personal profession with the church. From this she was prevented only by her last illness. In relation to it she remarked, "I am providentially prevented. It is a subject on which I feel so deeply that I cannot dwell upon it; I cannot speak of it."

It is an interesting fact in her history, that from early childhood she manifested the deepest interest in the cause of Christian missions. All information in relation to their state and progress she sought with eagerness; her heart was especially drawn out in prayer to God for the conversion of the heathen world. At her own instance she adopted a system of self-denial in relation to certain articles with which she had been indulged, asking the privilege of appropriating to that cause the avails thus saved. And, though well-informed in relation to the privations and hardships of the missionary life, she

fondly cherished the hope of herself going as a missionary to the heathen.

In her last illness and death, though her bodily sufferings were intense, her patience in enduring them was signally exemplary, and her submission to the Divine will entire. On one occasion, lying apparently in meditation, she, with strong energy of expression and manner, said, "I do submit—I *have* wholly submitted in this sickness to the will of God." On another occasion she said to one of her physicians, "Doctor, I want you to tell me *exactly* what you think of my case; I am willing, I am ready to die at any moment."

On the physician replying that there was no probability of her recovery, that he did not expect it, a smile of unmingled satisfaction played over her features. At another time, in reply to an inquiry on the subject, she said,

"Sweet to lie passive in his hands,

"And know no will but his."

And at another; "I am willing to live, and

I am willing to die ; and I am willing to suffer pain, or any thing that will be for the glory of God." At another time she spontaneously said to her mother, "I should be disappointed if I should not die. But I would have no will of my own. I would have it ordered for the glory of God ;" and with an emphasis and energy of manner which marked all that she said on these subjects, she added, "If I live, may I live to his glory ; and if I die, may I die to his glory."

She had a very strong "desire to depart and to be with Christ." The only thing which gave her any wish to live, was concern for the bereavement of her mother. Filial affection was one of the most strongly marked traits of her character in life. On returning from the interment of her lamented father, she, then a child of only six years old, repaired to the room of her bereaved mother, and as she entered, fixing her eyes steadily on her, approached her, and with an unfaltering voice, and a dignity of manner almost

inconceivable in a child so young, while her own eyes were filled with tears, said, "Mamma, do not weep, I will be a comfort to you." And well did she redeem the pledge thus nobly given. This beautiful and lovely feature of character, under the improving power of sanctifying grace, gained strength in death. At one time being asked by a friend who watched by her bed-side, if she was resigned to her sickness, she said, "If I knew I were to die this night I could not shed one tear. Were I to cast a look behind, it would be for my mother." At another time she said to her mother, "How sweet—how delightful would it be, if we could go to heaven together. But, mamma, we must wait God's time. His time is the best. We shall soon meet again;" and asked, "Mamma, do you feel willing to give me up?" On her mother's replying in the affirmative, she with transport said, "O, I am so happy, for I am so anxious to go to heaven." Her mother withdrawing from the room in tears, a sudden change passed over

her before joyful and heavenly countenance, indicating the deepest distress, and even anguish of soul. A friend observed, "Anna, something seems to oppress your mind ; be frank and say what it is." She replied with a deep sigh, "If any thing distresses me," with emphasis repeating, "*if any thing* distresses me, it is for my mother. I said a moment since that I wished to die : but I would live for my mother." At another time she remarked to her uncle, that during the first week of her illness she had felt great anxiety for her mother. On his replying, "If God sees fit to remove you, he will take care of your mother ;" she said with great earnestness, "O, uncle, please tell dearest mother *that*," repeating, "*tell her that*."

The day but one before her death the family were assembled in her room to witness her dissolution, which was then supposed to be near. While suffering intense pain of body, and unable to converse, her countenance assumed a most heavenly expression.

She continued to smile unceasingly, for an hour and a half, on her mother, her little brother, and occasionally on other friends, who surrounded her bed. During this time one remark only she uttered : "*I am happy, just as happy as I can be.*"

Her dissolution was eminently peaceful and joyous. This appearing at hand, her mother said, "I commit you into the hands of Jesus." She embraced her mother in her arms, and would have so died, but for the interposition of friends, to allow the inspiration of air. In a moment she was at rest.

Such were some of the last hours of this child of God. The words so indicated were verbatim her own. But it need hardly be added, that words cannot convey any adequate representation of her voice, manner, and expression of her countenance.

The other case is that of Mary Frances Huntington. The narrative is furnished by the late pastor of the church in Milton, N. C.

Did you never detect in yourself, when

reading accounts, either in premium books or obituary notices, of the *conversion* of very young persons—say of children, under ten or twelve years of age—a lingering feeling of incredulity? It has often been the case with me. Although I never charged the writers of such accounts with downright fabrication, yet I supposed that *many* of such stories were mostly fabulous, and *most*, if not *all* the rest, were painted, by the partiality of friends, far beyond what literal facts would accurately justify. Hence, very much of the practical effect of such statements has been lost to my mind, and the impression has too much prevailed that children must advance, to say the least, very far towards maturity, before they are capable of becoming the subjects of a work of saving grace. Recent and deeply interesting occurrences, however, under my immediate observations, have produced a great change in my views and feelings in relation to children. I can no longer doubt that children may become intelligent and

genuine Christians at a much earlier age than is generally supposed ; and that much more direct effort to this specific end ought to be used by ministers of the Gospel, christian parents, and Sabbath School teachers, than has been heretofore employed. With a view to call forth such effort more extensively, I feel myself called upon to give to the public the following unvarnished statement of facts. Many of them occurred in my presence—all of them are sustained by the most unequivocal evidence.

Mary Frances Huntington, the oldest daughter of M. P. and S. Huntington, was the first subject of infant baptism, about six years ago, in the church in this place. She was truly an interesting and intelligent child. At her death, she was not quite ten years old. She had attended constantly, for several years, the Sabbath School—of which she was very fond. But the facts to be narrated occurred principally within the last three months of her life.

During a protracted meeting in the month of October last, in the neighborhood, she was first observed to be unusually interested and manifestly affected on the subject of religion. This personal concern for the salvation of her soul was evinced by her marked readiness and anxious fondness to attend all the meetings. Whilst other little girls of her age were grouping together for amusement, she was seeking instruction in some religious circle or exercise, with the seriousness and solemnity of mature age. On several occasions she expressed herself, after the meeting had closed, as having felt very anxious to attend the inquiry meetings—but did not, because, being so young, she did not know whether it was proper or not:

And at the close of the meeting, when Christians were requested to stand and sing the 375th of the Village Hymns—

“Awake and sing the song

“Of Moses and the Lamb,” &c.

little Fanny was observed to stand and sing

with high relish and devout animation. Although her friends were quite at a loss to know exactly what to think, or what use to make of these things, yet they laid them up and pondered them in their hearts.

Some three or four weeks after this she expressed herself, in a conversation with one of her class-mates, with whom she was most intimate, as entertaining the hope of having become a Christian—referring to the protracted meeting as the time and occasion when she embraced that hope—and solemnly enjoining secrecy, on the ground that she was so young that she *might* be mistaken, and that she wished to be sure before she made it known. From this time till the commencement of her sickness it was noticed, not only by her parents, but others who were frequently with her, that she was unusually serious and retiring, remarkably affectionate and dutiful, and conscientiously attentive to religious exercises. The writer of this little narrative has been struck with her devout

and marked attention under preaching, where he has seen her hanging on his lips with a tearful eye and solemn countenance.

On Sabbath night before she was taken sick—just one week previous to her death, she was overheard talking to her two younger brothers respecting their manner of saying their prayers. Among other things, she was heard to tell them that she was afraid that they did not think of God, or of the meaning of their words when they prayed. After thus addressing them for some time, she took them into a private room, and all of them kneeling, she prayed with them aloud, and for them in particular. The next evening she was taken ill of the scarlet fever, at the house of her grandfather, in the same village in which her father lives.

From the commencement of her sickness she seemed to forebode, even to a degree distressing to her friends, that she would never recover. When any one spoke of what would be done *when* she got well, she would *very*

frequently correct the expression, and say, "*if* I get well." And she herself constantly used the term *if*, when speaking of her recovery. On several occasions during her illness, and entirely of her own accord, she spoke in terms of the strongest regret that she had wasted so much time and money in the use of dolls; saying, with solemn emphasis—"if it was to do again, I would not do so." She cautioned also several little girls with whom she was intimate, against playing so much with dolls, as sinful, and painful to the conscience.

A day or two before her disease came to a crisis, she said to her mother, "Mother, why don't you talk to me about God and about dying? Don't you know that I shall die to-night?" Her mother, very much affected, and suffused with tears, was at first unable to speak; but soon replied—"I don't know that you will die, and I hope you will not, to-night." She answered, "Yes, I shall; but don't cry, I have a hope." Soon after this,

she was told that the doctor had given her up, and had said that she could not live. The information, though perfectly understood, seemed to produce no alarm whatever, nor even the slightest excitement; on the contrary, it seemed to be rather acceptable; for, after a considerative pause, she sweetly and placidly replied, "Well, I don't care—I would as soon die as live—I shall be far better off in heaven." She was asked if she wished to go home (to her father's;) she replied, "I should like to go home; but it is no matter—I shall soon be at my heavenly Father's home." When she saw two of her young companions and class-mates present, she requested to be left with them alone. When her request was complied with, she called them by name, and exhorted them, at some length, to prepare for death, to pray, to love and obey the Savior, &c. As she approached her end, when she saw her doting parents and friends weeping around her, she frequently said to them, "Don't weep for me, but meet me in heaven."

On Sabbath, her last Sabbath on earth, she took leave of her parents, grand-parents, and other friends present, calling each one by name, and requesting them to kiss her. In the afternoon her tutoress asked her if she remembered little Jane? "Yes," was her reply, "and little Susan too." "Jane, you

* Little Jane is the subject of that excellent Tract by Legh Richmond. It has been since published together with a judicious selection of other Tracts, in a volume very well adapted for the use of schools. It was in this volume, as a school book, that little Fanny became acquainted with the interesting story of little Jane. And so much was she delighted with her character, that invariably, when she was permitted to make a selection for the exercise of the class in reading, she would choose little *Jane*. The little Susan referred to, was the daughter of the Rev. S. Kollock, of Norfolk, Va. The charming little volume of facts, published by the American Sunday School Union, respecting this remarkable child, was very much admired by little Fanny. She has been known repeatedly to take it from the Sunday School library, and to read it again and again. And it is con-

know," said her father, "when she was afflicted, could you trust in Christ; can you do so?" "O yes," was her reply, with animated emphasis. About dusk, the minister asked her, among other things—"Do you love the Savior, Fanny; do you want to see Him; can you trust yourself with Him?" With unhesitating promptness, emphatic earnestness, and a brightening countenance, she replied, "O yes! O yes!" Her father, being overcome on hearing her answer, wept aloud. She turned her head, looked at him, and said with peculiar sweetness of manner, "Don't cry, papa, don't cry." After this she became insensible, and about 12 o'clock expired, it is hoped, in the arms of Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

fidently believed that her taste, and principles, and character received much of their impress from frequently perusing the two above-named narratives.

In health, this dear little girl was noted for her unwavering veracity; she was never known to tell an untruth; and for her cheerful and prompt obedience to her parents.

During her illness, she was remarkable for her submissive temper, her affectionate disposition, and her pious turn of mind.

In view of these facts, thus faithfully narrated, many practical and important inferences might be drawn and addressed both to children and adults. But I will only ask in conclusion—ought not parents, ministers of the Gospel, and Sunday School teachers, to labor and seek much more directly and sedulously, with expectation and hope, for the conversion of children—even of little, young children?

But if your children should not become pious at a very early age, yet if they become so at any age, it will be a great mercy. And no one can, with any decent appearance of regard to truth, deny that in every age since the founding of the Christian Church, a

large proportion of her valuable members have been the children of praying and pious parents, who have sought the salvation of their offspring with an earnestness and assiduity only equalled in their strivings for personal salvation. There are in our country now many families containing from five to ten members, all of whom, so far as man can judge, are the children of the Most High. These families, almost without exception, were reared in the fear of God. Indeed so mighty, and so happy, and so manifest are the effects of a proper education, that for a century and a half it has been often asserted that a pious education, family worship, parental instruction, and a holy example, might be made so efficient as well nigh to supersede the preaching of the Gospel in the pulpit, as the ordinary means of conversion in those countries which have the Gospel. Be this as it may, it is certain that marvelous results do flow from proper efforts among the young.

“ I am the father of fourteen children, seven

of whom, I hope and believe, are in heaven, and the other seven are on the way to glory, as their profession and lives testify," said a venerable child of God, as with a stream of tears of thankfulness he burst into a song of praise to the riches of redeeming grace. An aged and pious mother not long since said—"I am now ready, I die whenever God shall call. I have seen his salvation accomplished on my children. I have one child in heaven, and eight other children whose lives testify that they love God, and are walking piously and humbly before him."

In this great work *mothers* have much to do. Paul traces Timothy's piety to his mother, and then to his grandmother. That great prophet Samuel, and that greater prophet Moses, both seem to have been under special obligations for maternal pious training. Bunyan and Davies, of blessed memory, were peculiarly indebted to their mothers for their religious impressions. The mother of eleven pious children was asked how she

came to be so highly favored? She replied: "I never took one of my children into my arms to give it nourishment, that I did not pray that I might never nurse a child for the devil." Ye mothers! remember this, and profit by it.

Suppose that you do your duty to your children, and should yet be called to bury some of them under circumstances which left you in doubt about their future and eternal happiness, how important, at such an hour of exquisite trial, to be able to say in truth, "I have done my duty, imperfectly it is true, but sincerely. I leave the matter with God."

Or suppose you should be called to die, your children being still unregenerate. You must bid them adieu. If at such an hour you could appeal to them and to God for your parental fidelity, and with confidence commit them to God the Father of the fatherless, how would the bitterness of that moment be removed and a prospect not delu-

live be opened before you and them, which the abiding certainties of the future should bring into joyful realization. There are *hours* when a bright and reasonable prospect is worth worlds. The hour of death is one of them.

Or suppose that old age had come upon you, and that you could look over the list of the names of your children, and say, "This one is a very devoted disciple—that one is of a very loving, tender spirit, and walks very humbly before God—and such an one is a missionary to the heathen. I have not lived for naught. Blessed be God." What sweet comforts would flow from such a review! Then if personal sickness should threaten you with death, and one and another of them should gather around your dying bed, like ministering spirits, and with all the tenderness of filial piety watch around your couch, and prevent your wishes, and whisper in your ear the precious promises, and seem never to grow weary in acts of filial piety,

how blessed would such a sight be ! Yet all this may not be expected but as the result of a proper education.

Or suppose that affectionate noble boy, or that sweet tender daughter, should begin to grow pale and feeble ; and disease should commence his ravages ; and your child should be able to say from the first—"weep not for me—I am happy, and safe, and blessed in Jesus ;" and should then, in all the triumphs of faith, bid farewell to earth and go to God, what unutterable consolation would flow from such a testimony to the goodness, and power, and truth of God !

But if your child should die, and you should know you had not done your duty, how different would be the whole scene, and the feelings which would certainly follow it ! Or if your own life should be evidently drawing to a close, and you should then remember that you had not trained your family to the service of God, it will prove that your practical judgment of the value of a soul, and

the consolations of religion, and the glories of eternity, was such as to leave you in guilty slumbers while in health, to fill you with pain when in death, and to cast a very dark cloud over your prospects, yea, perhaps, to cover them with impenetrable gloom for ever.

Let it be for a memorial, that what you most desire your children to be, they probably will be, even though the expense at which they may attain it be enormous. Agrippina, Nero's mother, said of her son—"Let him slay me, so he but be emperor." He was emperor, and he did slay her. "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath," says God to Israel.* If your highest wish for your children is that they may be great, or wise, or successful in this world's affairs, your wish may be gratified. But they and you must bear all the evils incident to an election displaying so profound folly.

And as Agrippina, so many other mothers

* Hos. 13 : 11.

have helped to ruin their children. Many mothers pursue such a course, especially in reference to their sons, as naturally leads to dreadful ruin. All this she may do through a misguided love.

"A parent's heart may prove a snare ;

"The child, she loves so well,

"Her hand may lead with gentlest care

"Down the smooth road to hell."*

It may be profitable here to present in contrast two death-bed scenes, one of which was illumined by light from heaven, and the other rendered gloomy by the fearful looking for of judgment. Let us take the close of the life of that little boy, who at three years old wept at the thought of annihilation. He lived to finish a course of regular study in one of our most respectable colleges. He returned to his father's house, with the hope of soon commencing a course of theological study. But pulmonary consumption had taken fast hold on him. He gradually declined, and told his friends to prepare for giving

* Montgomery.

him up. Venerable parents, and beloved brothers and sisters, and kind friends were his daily companions. They all courted his society. He spoke tenderly of them, but said his affections were settled on Christ in heaven. When he saw any weeping by his bed, he exhorted them to be dumb and not open their mouths ; for, said he, " it is the Lord ; let him do what seemeth good unto him." He said he had desired to glorify God in the work of the ministry on earth, but he should be able to glorify him better in heaven. When extreme suffering came upon him, and he thought his hour had come, he never seemed alarmed. And when the paroxysm was over and he still found himself in time, he would sometimes say—" O Lord, how long ? Why wait thy chariot-wheels so long ? Yet not my will, but thine be done." Not a fear agitated his breast for months. Holiness to the Lord was written on his countenance and all his conversation. Frequently, when it was thought that he was going, he would

give a look or make a sign of affectionate and joyful farewell. At last the time of his release came. One Sabbath morning, his soul seeming to say as the angel to Jacob, "Let me go, for the day breaketh," took its flight, leaving his friends weeping tears of sorrow for their own bereavement, and tears of gratitude for the salvation which God had wrought for him whom they greatly loved.

Let us now turn to a different scene. "A young girl, eighteen years of age, was brought up by her parents in all the gayeties and follies of youth. By her parents she was encouraged to ornament her person and engage in every vain amusement. When she was taken ill, three physicians were sent for immediately. They pronounced her speedy dissolution. No sooner was their opinion made known to her, than she requested as a favor, that all her gay companions might be collected with haste. They were soon around her bed; when she told them she was going to die, described the awful manner in which

they had spent their precious time, and in an affecting manner exhorted them all to repentance before it was too late. Then turning to her father and mother, she addressed to them these heart-rending words : " You have been the unhappy instruments of my being ; you fostered me in pride, and led me in the paths of sin ; you never once warned me of my danger, and now it is too late. In a few hours you will have to cover me with earth ; but remember, while you are casting earth upon my body, my soul will be in hell, and yourselves the miserable cause." Thus she spake, and soon after expired.

Ah ! what a contrast between these two deaths, and all resulting from the different courses pursued by parents ! This same contrast will be still more marked in eternity. The pious children of pious parents will rise up at the judgment and call them blessed ; while the ungodly children of ungodly parents will rise up and call them cursed. A system of glorious exultation and mutual

good will be maintained by pious families in heaven. A system of fruitless recrimination and dreadful hate will be pursued by ungodly families in hell, where Jehovah will "pour out his fury upon the nations that know not God, and upon the families that call not upon his name."* "O my soul, come thou not into their secret—mine honor, be thou not joined to their assembly."

Does any one say, "I cannot change the heart of my child,"—the answer is? that no one asks you to do that. One of the great truths, which you must believe for yourself and inculcate on others, is, that all men are so wicked, and their natures so exceedingly corrupt, that they only can be renewed by the exceeding greatness of the power of God. Yet you must sow the seed. The Lord will make it grow.

By some it is said, "Good people's children are as bad as others, and even worse." If this remark is intended as a general one, nothing

* Isa. 10 : 25.

is more manifest than its entire falsity. If it is *not* intended as a general remark, it is irrelevant to the present discussion. David had his Absalom; Eli had his Hophni and Phineas; but that the seed of the righteous are in general as far from God as others, we boldly and utterly deny. Nor can any candid mind entertain such a belief for one hour. It is contrary to all common sense and common experience.

Should any say, "These things call for more intelligence, wisdom, and piety than we possess"—such a remark only proves that they must betake themselves to the word of God and to prayer, that they may obtain the wisdom which is profitable to direct." "The meek will he guide in judgment."

Should any be disposed to satisfy their consciences by merely sending their children to Sabbath Schools, by putting suitable books into their hands, and by setting a general good example of worldly morality before their children, let such remember that these

things they ought to do, and not to leave the others undone. One duty cannot fill the place of another. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments."

Conclusion.

It is a very solemn thing to live in this world: It is a peculiarly solemn thing to live here, charged with the care of the immortal souls of even little children. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." And may it not be said—Train up a child in the way he should *not* go, and when he is old he will not depart from it? Did we all but duly realize the awful solemnity of our circumstances in the varied relations of life, each one's conduct having its influence on others, and blessing them with its hallowed character, or involving them, as Achan involved his fami-

ly, in a common ruin with himself, we would not be disposed to attach so little importance to our conduct. The adults of this generation are, in an important sense, to determine whether the adults of the next generation are to be idle or industrious—honest or knavish—ignorant or intelligent—lovers or haters of truth—bigoted or liberal—miserly or generous—selfish or patriotic—profane or reverent—vicious or moral—atheists or Christians. Let all remember that the reins of government, of every kind, are every day passing from the hands of the aged and experienced into the hands of youth, and that unless the proper course be pursued, the chariot of state will presently be broken by the violence of its movements—the vessel of the church swallowed by some voracious Maelstrom, and all will be lost. Verily it is a solemn thing to *live* as well as to *die*. The Lord help us all to do both to his honor and glory, and to our own highest good ; and to his name shall be the praise. Amen.

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