

HOME,
THE SCHOOL,
AND
THE CHURCH;
OR THE
PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.

EDITED BY
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CORRESPONDING SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

VOL. V.

PHILADELPHIA:
265 CHESTNUT STREET.

PRINTED BY C. SHERMAN.

1855.

THE PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.

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ARTICLE I.

THE RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE AND THE APPLIANCES OF THE PARENTAL RELATION.*

BY THE REV. LOYAL YOUNG, OF BEAVER, PA.

JUDGES 13: 12 (last clause),—"How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?"

WHEN Israel took possession of their promised heritage, and drove out the nations of Canaan, they left a people on their southwestern borders, warlike, impetuous, and of prodigious bodily stature. For centuries they were a thorn in the side of God's chosen people. Often were the latter trodden down and crushed by these relentless Philistines. But if their tyranny was grievous, their idolatry was enticing. And this was the true secret of their power. They tempted Israel to worship Dagon and Baalzebub. It was only when Israel yielded to idolatry, that these powerful enemies triumphed, and riveted the chains of their servitude. When Israel repented and cried to God, deliverers were raised up, and the church became free.

One of these deliverers was Samson, whose athletic frame and strength of muscle made him more than a match for the strongest and bravest of his foes. Being set apart by Heaven as the deliverer of his country, he felt religiously bound to fulfil his mission. And when moved by divine impulse, he carried consternation and death into the ranks of the enemy. Neither green withs nor new ropes could bind him; massive city gates were borne aloft on his shoulders to the mountain height; and the firm pillars of Dagon's temple were thrown down by a single impulse.

Introductory to his birth, the angel of the covenant announced to his parents (Manoah and his wife), that they were about to be honoured as the parents of a mighty deliverer of his country. Manoah, impressed with the responsibility of the trust thus to be committed to them, in the education of a child for such a work, and

* This discourse was delivered by appointment before the Synod of Pittsburgh, in the year 1853, and requested for publication.

prompted by that pious solicitude which all parents should feel for their own offspring, in a second interview proposed the question of our text, "How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?"

What father, what mother, has not made the same inquiry as often as a new helpless member has been added to the family, to be nurtured, instructed, and guided in the path of life? What wonderful provision has God made for that young immortal! He has provided hearts to love it, and hands to minister to its wants. Months and years before it can understand to whom it owes such a debt of gratitude, it is watched over with all the solicitude of maternal love! With a sleeplessness that never tires, and a cheerfulness that never flags, does the fond mother, like a guardian angel, watch, and nourish, and caress, and guide, and reprove, and comfort. As it rises toward manhood, the strong arm of the father is reached forth to uphold, govern, and defend.

And will parents, so alive to the present and earthly interests of their children, feel a proportionate concern for their future and spiritual interests? Would that it were always so! Would that the mother as she presses her infant to her breast, and the father as he exults in its unfolding intellect, were always impressed with the solemn consideration, that the rich and joyous treasure is not a mere plaything, or idol, to be loved and worshipped; but an immortal being, to be trained in its depravity for the second death, or to be renewed by divine grace, and made an angel for the skies. Then, with more overwhelming solicitude, they would ask the question, "How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" Parents may well inquire, "How shall we order the child," to promote a vigorous constitution; and "How shall we order the child," to secure a cultivated mind? But their most earnest inquiry should be, "How shall we order the child" to insure its spiritual and eternal welfare, the salvation of its soul? Leaving the first question to the physician, and the second to the teacher, let us confine our attention to the last.

If we cannot make our children Samsons in physical strength, let us train them with him to be Nazarites in a spiritual sense; strong in virtue and in devotion to God. Let the consecration of their God be upon their heads (Numbers 6: 7); and let them drink neither wine nor strong drink, but let them be filled with the Spirit.

The answer to the question, "How shall we order the child?" is to be sought, not only in the perusal of the inspired word, but in the histories of families, the successes and failures of those who have gone before us, the rejoicings and bitter regrets of those who have witnessed the godly lives and triumphant deaths of beloved children, or seen them, profligate and abandoned, go down to an unblest and untimely grave. Abraham, exulting in the fulfilment of God's covenant, in blessings on the head of his Isaac, and David's heart, breaking over the untimely death of his abandoned Absalom, are

instructive commentaries on the subject of family training. Both were devotedly pious men, and cared for their families. Abraham commanded his children and his household after him that they should keep the way of the Lord. And David, after engaging in the public exercises of religion, did not forget family duties, but returned to bless his house..

But the mother of Isaac was a pious Hebrew, while the mother of Absalom was the daughter of a foreign prince, probably herself an idolater. This may in part account for their different success.

Let us consider—

I. *The Religious Influence of the Parental Relation.*

II. *The Ways and Means of its More Effectual Application.*

Parental influence, though silent like the nightly dew, is the most powerful human influence exerted on earth. It is an influence generally exerted for years, and in the most favorable circumstances for making an impression. The parent is the child's exemplar. His first impressions are formed from a mother's looks and tones of voice. The parent is to the child the standard of truth, the oracle of instruction, the ideal of excellence. Loves he gold—the child catches the flame, and becomes a miser. Grasps he for power—the young heart is filled with dreams of rank and authority. Serves he his God—the youthful imitator learns to serve him too.

That parent who has trained a family to respectability, religion, and usefulness, though in other respects he may be humble and obscure, is a benefactor. He has cast his influence forward, and improved the future. He has been a hidden spring, but has set in motion a current which will widen and deepen till the end of time.

On the other hand, parents who have trained their children to irreligion and vice, however bright their own career of virtue, have sent forth a moral pestilence upon the community, which will work its ruinous way through time, and be felt in the world of spirits, and forever.

Next then to the securing of their own salvation, this, for parents, is the great business of life,—to train immortal beings for God.

In looking at the religious influence of the parental relation, we may view it in its source, and in its extent.

I. *Its source.* The mere relation of parent and child, is not a source of religious influence. Nobility and estates are transmitted. Bodily organizations and complexions are hereditary. And the *disposition* of the parent often descends to the child. So is it with general depravity. Adam "begat a son in his own likeness." And that likeness has descended to all his natural posterity. But piety is not hereditary; it springs from God's blessing on appointed means, and not from mere relationship. "Begin not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father."

Whence then the religious influence of the parental relation? It results from God's covenant, and the training and prayers involved

in that covenant. To believers' natural seed, God has in covenant promised a blessing. To the father of believers God said (Gen. 17: 7, 8), "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee." To this promise or covenant, Peter alludes when he says (Acts 2: 38, 39), "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and your children."

Parents should be fully persuaded that if they keep the covenant, God will not break it, but will accomplish all that he has spoken. But it is only when parents perform the duties involved in the covenant, that they can claim the fulfilment of the promises. It is only when the child is trained up in the way he should go, that the parent is assured, that when old he will not depart from it. Religious character depends, under God, upon training; it is not hereditary. The acorn will produce an oak, and nothing else. The countenance of the sire is seen in the son, though separated by desert wastes and ocean waves. But religious character is of God, and the instrumental cause is the parents' training, or training by some substitute. The Christian's child trained up by a heathen, will be a heathen, and the Hindoo child nursed in the arms of a Christian female, and taught to pray the Christian's prayer, will, by the grace of God, be a Christian.

Parents in covenant with God, will, to their instruction and discipline, add their prayers. They will lay hold of the covenant and plead God's promises. Others may pray importunately for the rising race. Friend may intercede for friend's posterity. But who can pray with a parent's solicitude, when from the depths of a burdened heart, remembering God's covenant faithfulness, he entreats with Abraham, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"

2. But we proceed to speak of the *extent* of the religious influence of the parental relation.

We shall not dwell upon the religious influence of the parental relation reflected back upon the parents themselves—how the decline of their lives is rendered peaceful and happy by the filial love and piety of those whom they have trained in the fear of the Lord. But we shall speak of its influence on the *temporal* welfare of the children, on their *spiritual* welfare, on their *later posterity*, and on the *world at large*.

(1.) Religious training promotes the *temporal* interests of the children. The chief anxiety of many parents seems to be that their children acquire wealth, distinction, and mental accomplishments. No pains are spared to provide an inheritance for them. But who does not discover that the true road to earthly comfort and competence is through virtue? "Godliness has the promise of *this life* and of that which is to come." The fifth commandment promises

"long life and prosperity" to children who are successfully trained to obey their parents and to serve God.

Many temporal calamities may be traced to the influence of irreligious training. To this, in part, the prophet ascribes the final destruction of Jerusalem. (Ezek. 22 : 7.) "In thee have they set light by father and mother." To this, in part, is ascribed the destruction of the nations of Canaan. They "cursed father and mother." (Lev. 20.)

The Dead Sea affords a perpetual monument of God's displeasure at the wickedness of the cities of the plain. And there the young had been early initiated into the basest of crimes, so that even God's angels could not spend a night in Sodom without being insulted with obscene words, and threats of violence, from the lips of the "old and young," who gathered around them. The storm of burning wrath which followed was kindled in part by these neglected youth, who were bold in crime and stout in transgression.

Indeed, the Deluge may be ascribed to the fact, that the instruction of the children of the "sons of God," was committed to the daughters of men. This instruction resulted in the wickedness and violence, which called down the wrath of the Almighty.

(2.) Religious training is especially important as promoting the *spiritual and eternal interests* of the children. It is in *this* that the overwhelming responsibility of parents appears. Parents, the deathless spirits of your children are to be trained *for the skies*. Upon their training depends, under God, their salvation! If your children are lost, fathers and mothers of the covenant (I say it affectionately), you have failed to do your whole duty. Parents cannot impart grace, but with God's assistance they can perform their vows, and God will do the rest.

A celebrated poet has said with great truth, "Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined." An inspired poet and philosopher has said (Ecl. 11 : 3), "If the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." If then the young tree is bent to the south, in that direction will it continue to lean; by the law of gravitation, as it leans it will fall; and as it falls it shall lie. This is the regular progress and end of the tree; and with almost equal certainty of the child. According to his youthful habits he will live; as he lives he will die; and as he dies, he will spend his eternity. God may at any moment interpose, and bend his stubborn will to the obedience of faith. But why should parents expect a tornado of divine influence, just at the critical moment when the tree is falling, to send it over in a direction contrary to that in which it has always leaned? Yet on this slight hope of deathbed repentance, many parents are resting, while they witness the strengthening habits of vice in those whom they have brought into being, and for whose training they must render an account to God!

Shall parents feel no concern whether their children be saved or lost—be the friends or the enemies of God forever? Shall they in

their anxiety to provide for them worldly substance or distinction, lose sight of their undying souls? Amazing folly! Dreadful cruelty! To open up a smooth passage in this world, by which they may glide pleasantly along into the gulf of woe!

Irreligious parents will perhaps excuse themselves for neglecting the religious education of their children, on the ground that they themselves are irreligious and have taken no vows. But would it satisfy the child perishing for want of bread, for the parent to say to him, "I am starving with you; if you die, grieve not, for I am dying too; I have taken no vows to help you!" Parents, there is no way of ridding yourselves of your responsibility! You must render an account to God for this stewardship. Here is room for your most earnest solicitude! Here is a motive sufficient to call forth your most vigorous exertions! Is it not the most painful thought that ever disturbs the peace of your pillow, that the souls of your children may perish? Should it not rest as a heavy burden on your hearts, as long as they seem to be strangers to religion, that they may spend their eternity in hopeless woe? On this subject, there cannot be too deep solicitude.

Religion should be at the very threshold of all your plans for your children. It should be your landmark in all your efforts. O teach them that they have immortal souls; that those souls are already stained with guilt; that God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness; that the blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from sin; that by faith in his blood they may be pardoned, saved, and dwell among the pure and blessed in realms of glory. O urge them to accept without delay the blessings offered in covenant, when they were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Urge them to seek a new heart. Let them not reproach you in a dying hour for your unfaithfulness. Let not your own hearts reproach you. How blessed that parent whose child dies with the sweet words of religious hope on his tongue, ascribing to parental instruction, under God, his being led to the sinner's friend. And O how blissful the meeting of parents and children in heaven, where their love shall be increased and cemented for ever! Such will be the reward of parental faithfulness.

(3.) Finally, the religious influence of the parental relation is communicated to *society at large*, and transmitted to *future generations*.

The true source of influence upon society is in the family. Families are so many springs, and all the streams of civil virtue and prosperity take their rise here. If the springs are pure, society will enjoy their healthful influence; if impure, moral contagion will be diffused abroad.

The happy training of a virtuous household will do more for society than all the "associations," and "phalanxes," which infidel visionaries have ever devised for remodelling and improving society. There can be no improvement on God's own model. No, verily!

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” The family is the best community for developing the social and religious feelings, for awakening a sense of responsibility, and for securing religious instruction. It was one of God’s earliest institutions. And according to the prophecy of Malachi, he organized it as it is, “that he might seek a *godly seed*.”

Every well-conducted family is a seminary of virtuous citizens. Abram founded a nation for greatness by his family discipline and instructions. “Abram shall surely become a great and mighty nation.” Why? “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him.”

But parental influence is not confined to the age in which the parent and his children live. The blessing is handed down from generation to generation to the end of time.

He who neglects his family in his zeal for blessing the world, has mistaken his mission. He seeks to purify the stream by neglecting the fountain. Let the fountain first be purified.

God’s covenant is from father to son. How beautiful did piety flow in the channel of Abraham’s descendants, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. The parental relation is a golden pipe, through which the waters of salvation are conveyed to coming generations.

There are isolated pools and cisterns which at times bless the barren desert, and quench the thirst of the traveller; but the most certain water is the running stream, fed by a pure fountain. So God in sovereign mercy, gathers here and there a trophy of grace from families whose ancestors knew not God; but it is chiefly from families flowing down from a pious ancestry, in covenant with him, that he takes his sons and daughters. From such an ancestry often springs a successive race of holy, devoted, and benevolent men.

Dr. J. W. Alexander, in his admirable treatise on “Family Worship,” says, “There are clergymen now in the Scottish Church, who have descended from an unbroken line not only of believers, but of ministers: and there is a blessed instance in our own communion, of six living preachers of the gospel, all sons of one man, himself a servant of the sanctuary.” We may add, that in this synod was a devoted servant of the sanctuary,* whose father, two uncles, and a brother, were also ministers, and four of whose sons are this day ministering before God, and two of them present as members of this synod. Nine ministers of one family in three generations. Again, four sons of a ruling elder in the bounds of this synod entered the ministry, one of whom is now an aged member of synod.†

Another fact may not be out of place in this connection. An aged “mother in Israel” is now living, of Puritan Pilgrim parentage (formerly in the bounds of this synod), whose husband was, while living, an elder in the church; her eldest son, while living, an elder; another is now an elder; another a minister of the gospel;

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and the remaining five children all consistent members of the Presbyterian Church. Of her grandchildren, nineteen are now members of the church. Of the thirteen grandchildren over twenty-one years of age, twelve are consistent members of the church. All the grandchildren who having arrived at adult years have died, have died in the triumphs of faith; while several others of them, through the influence of a precious revival, are recently indulging hope in Christ. The oldest grandson is an elder; and of the eight families descended from her, there is not one but what contains a child or children hopefully pious. Such facts speak loudly for religious training.

The Christian parent looks forward with anxiety even to his *remote* posterity. "Shall they be God's dear children?" is his earnest inquiry. And here the covenant comes to his relief, and says, "*Yes, if you are faithful.*" God shows mercy unto thousands (of generations) of them that love him and keep his commandments. "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth trouble, for they are the *seed* of the blessed of the Lord, and *their children* with them." "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of *thy seed*, nor out of the mouth of *thy seed's seed*, saith the Lord, *from henceforth and forever.*"

This view of the subject gives increasing interest to the cause of missions. For, every parent rescued from idolatry, and brought into the fold of Christ, is the fountain of a perennial stream of influence, widening and spreading till "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." And on the other hand, every unconverted son or daughter of a Christian family, is an underground current, *drawing off* and *wasting* this refreshing stream of hope and comfort for posterity, so as to render sterile what would otherwise be the garden of the Lord.

Should the present race of Christian parents cease to exert a religious influence on their children, the world would be set back in its career of virtue and prosperity a thousand years.

But we proceed to consider:—

II. *The ways and means of the more effectual application of the religious influence of the parental relation.*

And here the important question of our text recurs—"How shall we order the child?" We fear it is true, that parental influence is not now as vigorous for good as it once was, and as it might now be. When the pioneer fathers in this Presbyterian region lived, were not greater pains taken in giving thorough religious instruction to the children of the church? They were catechized by their own parents. They were taught that they did not belong to the world, but to the church. They were early impressed with the sanctity of the Sabbath,

and the value of religious ordinances. They were obedient to parents, and reverential to the aged.

And as parents went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, they returned with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. Do not those days of prayer and carefulness for the children of the church, contrast mournfully with the present times? Does not this account for the fact, that so many of our baptized youth, sons and daughters of praying parents, are without hope and without God in the world?

The church is justly alarmed, that the candidates for the ministry are not increasing. Is there not also cause for alarm, that the number of pious youth generally is so nearly stationary? It is so common to find unconverted sons and daughters, where the parents are professors of religion, that we begin to think it a matter of course, forgetting that God is a covenant-keeping God, and that if our children are strangers to him, we have not fulfilled all our baptismal vows.

Christian parents, are there means in our reach which we have not fully tried; let us lose no time in using them. Let not an influence now within our reach—an influence so powerful for good; an influence involving the eternal happiness of the rising race, and of future generations—be lost! But if possible, let it be increased a hundred fold.

Parents should ponder this subject with all the solicitude of those who have the destinies of souls committed to them. The commander of a vessel who by *ignorance* or *carelessness*, endangers the lives of the voyagers, is justly blamed. That was a righteous indignation which went forth after the "Norwalk tragedy," because through carelessness, scores of passengers were suddenly dashed to death. And is he blameless, who undertakes to guide those young immortals committed to his charge, through the perilous sea of life, or over the dangers of their earthly path, without a knowledge of his duties or without care to perform them? The priceless treasure of immortal souls is guided onward to the haven of bliss or the gulf of despair! Through all the voyage there are shoals, and quicksands, and rocks, and whirlpools. The parent stands at the helm. Let him beware lest all perish together.

What then are the ways and means of the more effectual application of this religious influence?

1. Let the *seal of the covenant* be applied to all the children of the church.

As no one can estimate the value of the inheritance sealed in baptism, so no one can tell the importance of the seal. Those who object to the baptism of infants ask, what good can an *infant* receive from a rite, of which it knows nothing? And others sometimes partake of their scepticism. But it is enough to know that God has reasons for his own appointments, and that in the discharge of duty parents are to expect the blessing. Who can tell what salutary connection God has instituted between the sign and the thing signified? Baptism is not regeneration, but where parents are faithful to their

vows, they have a right to expect that their children will be born again.

Does not observation teach us that God has wonderfully honoured the ordinance of baptism, by bringing those who are baptized "to subscribe with their own hands to be the Lord's?" "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

2. Pious parents should themselves attend to the spiritual instruction of their children. This need not exclude *helps*. The Sabbath-school—the parochial school—and especially a pastor's private and public teachings, are invaluable helps—but they should be regarded as *helps only*. The parent cannot throw off his own responsibility by calling in foreign aid. No tuition from others should supersede the direct personal guidance of the Christian parent. If children must be sent from home, let them be placed under the care of consistent and pious guardians.

The father, and in his absence, the mother, should be the chaplain of the family. The mother should feel it her duty and privilege, in the absence of the father, to lead her household to God in prayer, unless some other suitable person is present to conduct the devotions of the family.

Pious parents should be *with* their children as much as possible. Who are safer companions? The wickedness of the children of many pious persons may be ascribed (at least in part) to their separation from parental influence. Pious kings of Judah were prevented by public business from attention to their families. Hence they were often succeeded by irreligious sons. Such was the case with Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Committing their children to the care of irreligious mothers, while they were employed in the affairs of state, their sons forsook the God of their fathers.

On the other hand, the influence of parental oversight is seen in the piety of many who enjoyed such oversight. Isaac and Jacob were almost inseparably with their parents, till their religious principles were formed. Joseph was at home in his youth, more at home, it would seem, than his brothers. Moses, though the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, was providentially reared by his own mother. Samuel, it is true, went early from home, but it was to reside with a pious servant of God, and to attend constantly on religious exercises; which, united with a mother's fervent prayers and occasional visits, led him to the God of his fathers.

Natural affection, a sense of obligation, acknowledged authority, all combine to make home in religious families the place of highest religious influence. John Newton devoutly acknowledged the influence of a mother's early instruction and prayers, though that mother died when he was a child. Had she lived to water the seed sown, he might have been spared that long night of sin and wretchedness which followed. Let parents furnish at home, and under their

own eyes, rational enjoyments, and home will be to their children the dearest spot on earth. There the heart will be gradually moulded and strengthened to all that is virtuous, and noble, and devout. Children will not then desire to wander abroad in quest of amusements. And in after years, they will recall with deep emotion the old family room, sacred to love, to social joy, to cheerful converse, to songs of praise, to earnest, wrestling prayer, where parents and children bowed together before the throne of grace, and held communion with God and each other; where God himself came down and hallowed the place with his presence.

The word of God contemplates parents as the natural instructors of their own children. The Jewish father was to teach the words of the law to his children, talking of them when sitting in the house, and when walking by the way, when lying down, and when rising up. The Psalmist says, "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." (Ps. 78: 2-7.) The prophet says that in the ages of gospel triumph, "the father to the children shall make known thy truth." (Isa. 38: 19.)

Neither father nor mother should seek to roll the whole responsibility of religious instruction upon the other. The inquiry, "How shall we order the child?" implies that both parents were ready to unite in the effort.

3. Would parents make a more effectual application of their religious influence, let them guard their children against evil associates. Let them say with David, "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." Let them say with Solomon, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

The Bible declares, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." And, "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

It is not wise to exclude the young from society. Their social feelings should be gratified by proper company.

But great care should be exercised in the choice of their companions. It may not be possible to prevent contact with evil. Indeed contact with evil under such circumstances as will lead to resist and overcome it, is a part of that moral gymnasium by which our virtuous principles and habits are strengthened, just as the muscles of the body are strengthened by exercise. The child that over-

comes to-day, gathers strength thereby to overcome to-morrow. Divine aid is needed, it is true, but divine aid operates in *strengthening principles* in the use of appropriate means. But till their moral principles are confirmed, children should be carefully guarded from evil, lest instead of overcoming the weight, it fall and crush them.

4. To give greater efficiency to the religious influence of the parental relation, *family discipline* should be faithfully exercised.

The levelling system of the present age, is nowhere more unfavourable than in the family. Obedience is the first lesson that should be taught. If this lesson is well learned, all others become easy. We plead not for *severity*. Tyranny is offensive to God. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." But the parent's authority ought to be *early, absolute, and entire*. The rod is an ordinance of God. "He that spareth the rod, hateth his son." "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Disobedience to parents will lead to further disobedience to God, while the child that regards the authority of a religious parent, will almost certainly learn to regard the authority of God.

But while the parent demands obedience, let the child be fully aware that it is for no selfish purpose, but because the parent seeks God's glory and the child's temporal and spiritual good.

5. Finally, we must *pray* with and for our children, *with more fervent importunity*.

Need the necessity of *family worship* be insisted upon? And yet it is to be feared that this service is wholly or occasionally neglected by parents who profess to be the Lord's. They give their children no opportunity of asking, "What mean ye by this service?" Can they expect their children to pray when they set them no example? Can they expect the fire of devotion to burn where they have no altar? Can they ever look for *safety* where the name of God and the blood of the covenant are not found upon the lintels?

O how many infant hearts first learn to aspire after heaven, while the parents are commending them to God in earnest family prayer! And how many religious impressions are smothered and die, because there is no domestic altar to keep alive the flame kindled by the preached word!

But the question arises whether those of us who regularly commence and close the day with family worship, make it as valuable to our children as it might be. Are not our devotions sometimes a mere formality? To prove a blessing, the exercise should be *instructive, earnest, spiritual*.

But we must wrestle for our children with more importunity *in the closet*.

We must first be really concerned for their salvation, and then with an importunity that takes no denial, present them before the Hearer of prayer.

What happy results have followed such wrestlings, will be fully known only in eternity. The fruits of such prayers have been wit-

nessed in our synod. Permit me to cite a few cases. There are no doubt other similar cases, which will be unfolded in the light of eternity, but which now remain hidden in the secrecy of the closets where effectual and successful prayers were offered, and which God answered in love, to the salvation of the sons and daughters of the church.

Let us ask, then, how was one of the fathers of the Presbyterian Church in Western Pennsylvania, Dr. M'Millan, brought into the ministry? We trace back the stream of that mighty influence which is now spreading and increasing, to the devotion and prayers of a pious father. His lamented biographer says, "Before his birth, his father, having lost his infant son, whose name was John, solemnly vowed to the Lord that if he would give him another son, he would call his name JOHN, and devote him to the gospel ministry. This son, given in answer to prayer as in the case of Zacharias, was a chosen instrument in the conversion of many."

How was Dr. M'Millan's pupil and co-labourer, that gifted servant of God, Samuel Porter, brought into the ministry? Let the biographical sketch recently published, declare. "His parents were both persons of approved piety; especially his mother, who devoted him to the Lord at his birth, for the work of the ministry, in reference to which she called him SAMUEL. Having thus consecrated him to the Lord, she diligently trained him up for his service. His pious mother, whenever she retired for secret devotion, was in the habit of taking her son with her, and on her knees before the throne of grace, and her hand upon his head, of pouring out her prayers to her covenant God on his behalf."

We have another example in the case of an aged servant of God, still living, and whose attendance upon the meetings of this synod, has been remarkably punctual.* When he was an infant of days, his maternal grandfather died, who was a devotedly pious man. Just before his death he was led to the door, at his own request, supported by his attendant watchers. It was night. He looked with anxious gaze toward the heavens, as though longing to fly away to God. But his work was not quite done. As he cast his eyes downward, the little babe in its mother's arms smiled upon him; at which sight he lifted his eyes again to heaven and poured forth a most earnest and impassioned prayer for the infant. It was his dying prayer. His work was now done, and he fell asleep in Jesus. From that hour the parents, who had already devoted the child to God in baptism, resolved with unwavering purpose, to educate him for the ministry.

"That great pains were taken," says one, "in the religious training of children by many of the early settlers of Western Pennsylvania, especially by some of the pioneer ministers of our church, is a fact abundantly proved by credible testimony and general tradition. It is related of Rev. Joseph Smith, of Buffalo, Washington

* Rev. ROBERT JOHNSTON, who was not absent from a meeting of the synod, for *forty-two* years.

County, that he and his wife, were in frequent practice of appointing and observing special days of personal and family fasting and prayer for the conversion of their children. The subject was made known to the whole family, and a portion of the day would be spent in praying and conversing with the children. *They all* became hopeful subjects of divine grace, and some of them when quite young. The same in substance has been stated respecting the Rev. Dr. Power and others."

It may be added of Mr. Smith's family, that one of his sons became a devoted minister of the gospel, and four of his daughters ministers' wives, while one of his grandsons is a minister, and with us as a member of this synod.

Such facts are worthy of record, and should be pondered by parents of the present day with prayerful interest.

It has formerly been the glory of the Presbyterian Church in all her branches, to care for the religious training of the young. We revere the memory of our ancestors—Covenanters and Puritans. And in nothing do we admire them more, than in their care for the pious instruction of their children. Their labours and sufferings for the good of posterity, added lustre to the martyr crowns which encircled many of their brows. At this distant day, and in these ends of the earth, we enjoy the fruit of their labours.

To their prayers and instructions we are indebted, under God, for all the precious and elevated advantages which we enjoy. Let us hand down untarnished to our children these advantages, derived from a pious and consecrated ancestry, that they may in turn rise up and call us blessed.

Christian *mothers*, this subject addresses *you*. You have to do with first impressions! That little one that begins to lisp the name of mother, is now drinking in its lessons of virtue or vice from you. To Christian mothers, under God, may be ascribed the purity and worth of some of the most influential men that ever adorned the history of the world. The spirit infused into the boy has shone out in the man, in which you might read this inscription: "*A mother's love has made me thus.*" What cannot mothers do for the rising race and for posterity!

Christian *fathers*, this subject speaks to *you*. Think not to throw all the responsibility on the other sex. Your *united* energies are required. Remember Manoah's question, "How shall *we* train the child?" not how shall the mother do it? Your *stronger* arm and *sterner* nature are also needed to defend and govern.

Children, this subject speaks to *you*. Look into the heart of your anxious father, your affectionate mother. Why heaves that bosom with such deep emotion? It is silent but agonizing solicitude for *you*. For you those eyes are moistened with tears. For you those knees are bent in prayer. Will you pierce those hearts with continued grief by your impenitence! Will you bring down those gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Or will you not rather seek the God of

your fathers, and crown the declining years of your parents' lives with peace, and rejoicing, and your own being with a blissful immortality.

Finally, let us who *minister* before God, enforce this subject more constantly and more earnestly. The pastor has an excellent opportunity, in his public discourses, and when visiting the firesides of his people, to urge this subject on their attention.

Fathers and brethren, let us lead the way in our own families. And let us persuade our Abrams, our Manoahs, our Hannahs, and our Eunices, to consecrate their children to God and his Church. Then there will arise from our midst Isaacs, and Samuels, and Timothys, to be Christian husbandmen and judges, and devoted ministers; also *moral* Samsons, who shall carry destruction into every temple of Dagon and Baalzebub.

Let us plead to the ear and the heart of every parent the cause of their offspring. Let the hearts of the fathers be turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the earth, instead of being smitten with a curse, shall "keep jubilee a thousand years."

Imperial Salem will arise crowned with light; to whom may be said:—

"See a long race thy spacious courts adorn:
See future sons and daughters yet unborn,
In crowding ranks on every side arise,
Demanding life, impatient for the skies."

To parental faithfulness we look as the principal instrumentality for ushering in the Millennium. Jesus will ride again in triumph, not merely into Jerusalem, as formerly, but through the earth, in his chariots of salvation, when *children* learn again to sing, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Amen.



ARTICLE II.

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM BY CHRISTIAN PARENTS.

BY THE REV. THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D.*

GOD early and impressively proclaimed the manner in which He is to be approached in holy ordinances. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified."† This is still the standing law in the house of God. He is "greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence

* Extracted from "A Practical Treatise on Christian Baptism, by THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D." Published at Paisley, Scotland, in 1853. This is one of the best Treatises on the subject of Christian Baptism.—ED.

† Levit. 10 : 3.