

# CHAPTER I

## THE DUTY

### **The Teaching of Scripture**

We read in Matthew 21:15, 16, that “when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased. And said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” Again, in Acts 2:17, 18, it is declared that “it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit: and they shall prophesy.” Both these passages are descriptive of the nature, extent, and enlargement of the Christian church. In its nature it is spiritual; in its extent it includes both Gentile and Jew; and for its enlargement there is to be the co-operation and the consecrated efforts of both young and old, and females, as well as males.

The Christian dispensation, however, looks with peculiar interest and earnest expectation to the young. “Of such is the kingdom of heaven” [Matthew 19:14], “Out of their mouths God now perfects praise,” and in the Christian temple, their voices swell the general anthem of “Hosanna to the Son of David.” “On our sons and our daughters the Spirit of God is to be yet poured out,” so “that our young men and maidens may” unite in proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation, and while “the Spirit and the Bride say, come” echo their free and universal invitation to all the guilty and the perishing, and by every means in their power say unto them, “come” [Revelation 22:17]. And hence it is that partly as a fulfilment of this promise and also as a pledge of its permanent vitality we hear the apostle John saying, “I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. I write unto you young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you; and ye have overcome the wicked one. And now little

children abide in him; that when he shall appear ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” [I John 2:12, 14, 28].

## **How Children Are to Be Brought Up**

It is thus evident that parents are laid under obligation not only to “train their children in the way that they should go, that when they are old they may not depart from it” [Proverbs 22:6], but also to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” [Ephesians 6:4], that is (as the words certainly mean, and should be rendered in order to make them more intelligible), “bring them up in the education and discipline of Christians,” that is, of those who “are the Lord’s.” We are thus taught that our children by their baptism are devoted to the Lord, and become members of his church and kingdom, and that we are under obligation to bring them up as such, not merely by instructing them, and thoroughly imbuing their minds with Christian truth, but also by accustoming them to, and interesting them in, every part of Christian activity, devotedness, and zeal.

It follows, therefore, as an undeniable inference, that it is incumbent upon every Christian, parent, teacher, and church, to see to it that the children of their charge are brought up as the Lord’s—as Christians—as members of his visible church—and therefore not only as those who ought to believe in him, and to know the doctrines that are of God, but as those who are bound also to love him, to serve him, to honor him, and to co-operate, according to their measure of ability and their sphere of influence, in the promotion of his glory, and the advancement of his cause. And as the term “Missionary” is employed to designate the work of making known “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” [I Timothy 1:11] to those that know it not—which is the great work and duty of the church, and of every Christian—it is therefore our manifest duty to bring up our children in a missionary spirit, and in a missionary practice. A missionary is one who is sent to preach the gospel to those that are “sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death” [Luke 1:79], whether abroad, or in our own country. To have a missionary spirit, is to be anxiously desirous that such missionaries should be sent, and the gospel made known to all that are “perishing for lack of knowledge” [Hosea 4:6]. And a missionary practice or habit, is the habit of carrying out this desire, first,

by praying that such missionaries may be raised up and sent forth by the Lord of the harvest, into every part of his vineyard; secondly, by contributing as far as we can towards meeting the necessary expense of sending and supporting these missionaries, and supplying what is necessary to establish schools and print Bibles, and other needful books; and, thirdly, by uniting with zeal in such efforts as will promote this spirit, and secure this habit.

### **Children Can Do All That Is Required**

NOW all this, CHILDREN CAN DO. They can imbibe this spirit by learning to imitate Christ, who was the first and great missionary, who came as he was sent of the Father, “to seek and to save the lost” [Luke 19:10], and who while on earth, “went about doing good” [Acts 10:38]. By loving Christ children will learn to love their fellow men, for whom Christ “made a propitiation” [I John 2:2] as well as for them. And as Christ “became poor” [II Corinthians 8:9] and gave up everything for the sake of securing to us everlasting life, children can easily be taught that in order to be like Christ “they also must deny themselves” [Matthew 16:24] that they “may have to give to those that need” [Ephesians 4:28], and that as all their blessings flow from the gospel, they ought therefore to send that “godliness which hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come” [I Timothy 4:8], to all their fellow men. Now, having this spirit, children can be taught what they should really mean when they pray, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven” [Matthew 6:10], and that it is their duty by every means in their power to hasten the full and perfect accomplishment of these petitions, which, while they constitute the essence of all Christian prayer, are, at the same time, an infallible prophecy of the future and universal triumph of the gospel.

### **What Children Can Do They Ought to Do**

AND ALL THIS CHILDREN NOT ONLY CAN DO, BUT OUGHT TO DO. They ought to have this spirit. They ought to “love God with all their heart, and their neighbor as themselves” [Luke 10:27]. They ought to do unto the perishing heathen as they would think it right and proper that, if conditions were changed, the heathen (who

would then possess the gospel) should do unto them. They ought to “remember their Creator in the days of their youth” [Ecclesiastes 12:1], and devote to Christ “their bodies, souls and spirits” [I Thessalonians 5:23], that they may serve him even while young. What children can do they are as much under obligation to do as are those who are grown to years of maturity. Children ought therefore to pray, and give and labor as much and as earnestly as they can. If they do not, they are as surely guilty as if they lied, and stole, and took the name of the Lord in vain; since all these duties rest equally upon the authority and command of God, and arise with equal clearness out of the relations in which they stand to God and to their fellow men. Every child, therefore, should be made to know that Christ and his church, have a right to ask from him all that he can give, and all that he can do, for missions, and that as he is always getting from Christ, he should be always giving in grateful return. Many of these heathen, WHO ARE OUR NEIGHBORS ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF CHRIST, are daily perishing, and if our children as well as we ourselves are not doing what we can do to save them, how can we meet them when we and they shall both appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Besides if they are not doing this, what are children doing? Their hearts are hardening and becoming utterly insensible, through selfishness, worldliness, and indifference, to the miseries, especially the spiritual miseries, of their fellow men. They are daily becoming more averse to holiness, and more inclined to sin. They are becoming confirmed in the opinion that it is right for them to live for themselves, unto themselves, and in the gratification of their own desires. They are led to believe, and to act upon the belief, that this world is all-important, and the future world of comparatively little interest; and that there is no danger to be dreaded from what a man believes, and not much from what a man does. But is this the instruction or discipline of Christ? Is such a child brought up for God? No, he is given over to the world, the flesh and the Devil as their lawful prey. He is allowed to grow up an unbeliever, and to live as a young “atheist in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. This is the literal rendering of the words, “without God in the World” [Ephesians 2:12].