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ARTICLE I.

HOUSEHOLD RELIGION.

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WHEN Joshua, the renowned leader of the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan, was drawing near the close of his long and eventful life, he "gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God." Joshua recounted in their hearing the many instances of God's kindness towards them and their ancestors, from the calling of Abraham to their exodus from Egypt; the numerous miracles wrought in the wilderness for their benefit; and the extraordinary victories which he had enabled them to achieve in taking possession of their ancient inheritance.

This historical notice of God's mercies Joshua employs as the basis of an earnest exhortation to them to serve the Lord. "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord." They had seen enough of Jehovah's power and majesty, to prove him to be infinitely superior to the gods of the heathen; and they had experienced in their own history, such manifestations of his kindness and mercy, as to place them under the strongest obligations to love and serve him.

But if after all their minds were vacillating between the true and the false; if they were still undetermined whether they would worship God alone, or would blend therewith the idolatrous worship of their heathen neighbours, he desired them distinctly to understand that his own mind was fully made up; that irrespective of the course which they might choose to pursue, he and his household would adhere to the service of the true God. "If it be evil unto you to

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serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods whom your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: **BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD.**"

This resolution of Joshua contains what we properly denominate *household religion*. Let us notice

I. The constituent elements of *household religion*, as expressed or implied in Joshua's resolution to *serve the Lord*; and

II. Some motives to influence parents and heads of families to adopt this resolution as their own, and to carry it into practical effect.

1. *Household religion* involves the possession of *personal piety by the head of the family*. Joshua expressly mentions himself as well as his house; and if he had not, his resolution to influence them to be religious, implies a sense of moral obligation with regard to their principles and practice, never found in parents who are not truly pious. The forms of religion had better be maintained in our families by chaplains, or other proxies, than to live as many households do, without any visible recognition of the Divine being. But the employment of chaplains is seldom practicable, and other persons willing to officiate are not always at hand. Hence it is often an alternative, either for the head of the family to lead in their devotions, and perform other duties belonging to household religion, or to have them neglected altogether. Even if it were otherwise, parents are the constituted guardians and overseers of their families; and they are required to provide for their spiritual wants, as much as for their temporal; for their daily religious training, no less than for their daily bread. But how can they fulfil the Scripture direction, to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," unless they first devote themselves to the Lord's service? The experiment, if made, would be a failure. It follows, therefore, that a resolution to maintain household religion requires of parents and heads of families a serious attention to their own souls; such an attention as shall secure for themselves a saving interest in Christ.

In Joshua's determination to serve the Lord, he was doubtless influenced in part by personal considerations, irrespective of its effect upon others. He regarded his own duty as clear, whatever course his household or the people generally might choose to pursue. Even though his endeavours to influence and control the decision of those under his immediate care might be unsuccessful, he would still say "as for me." "Though all Israel, not excepting my own family, should turn away to idolatry, I will stand alone in the reasonable and glorious service of the true God." And so ought each of us to feel now, whatever may be our relations to society. Especially should it be so with partners in organizing the family relation. Their marriage contract should be accompanied by a solemn covenant to serve the Lord,—a covenant made first individually and

alone between each of them and his God, and then conjointly with each other, as the most sacred tie of their nuptial bond; thus becoming "heirs together of the grace of life."

But though Joshua was so decided with regard to his own personal duty and purpose, no matter what others might think or do, yet he evidently hoped by announcing his decision, to influence his hearers to do likewise; and he was not disappointed. Particularly did he design and expect to influence his household, and to caution others not to tempt them to idolatry; thus placing around them a *cordon sanitaire*, to secure their safety and protection against the moral malaria to which they were exposed. It is in this light that we now consider his pious resolution; and it sustains our position, that piety in parents and heads of families, is the first requisite for qualifying them to perform, in a successful manner, the duties of household religion.

2. The maintenance of household religion implies a *public religious profession*. Secret piety stands first on the list of religious duties. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet." In this retired sanctuary we should offer our daily devotions, like Nathaniel under the fig-tree, who, though unseen by mortal eye, was noticed and approved by our divine, omniscient Lord. But though secret devotion is enjoined as a necessary Christian duty, our piety must not be confined to the closet. Ostentation in religion is indeed rebuked by Christ; and yet he teaches that he also disapproves of concealment. Our being ashamed to confess him before men, involves the fearful consequence of his being ashamed of us in the presence of the angels of God. Household religion relates especially to duties of a social character; and hence those heads of families who are resolved to maintain it, must necessarily express in some visible form their faith in Christ, and their purpose to obey and serve him.

By a public profession of religion, we mean to include a union with the visible Church, which is a duty incumbent on all who love the Redeemer. But we intend more than this, viz., such a course of conversation and conduct as proceed from a pious heart, and evince the sincerity and genuineness of a religious profession. Zacharias and Elizabeth "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They were not only pious in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men. They were conscientious in the discharge of all the duties enjoined, both in the moral and ceremonial law. They were, in short, worthy members of the Church; and the spirit of their religious profession was carried into their households, and gave tone and character to their family devotions. Similar remarks may be made concerning Joshua. He publicly declared his veneration for Jehovah, the only true God, and he habitually practised those personal and relative duties which had been revealed to him as a servant of the Most High. True, he was a public man—

a military leader, and a civil judge. But though this circumstance gave greater publicity and notoriety to his words and actions than would have been done if he had moved in a more humble sphere, yet his religious profession was substantially the same as was made by every pious father in Israel; the same, likewise, as is virtually made now by every pious father who erects the domestic altar, and offers upon it, in the presence of his household, the sacrifice of prayer and praise.

Joshua's high social position ought to render his example especially forcible with public men. Let them not entertain the thought that experimental piety, or its profession before the world, or its maintenance in their households, is unimportant to them, or unworthy of their elevated positions. The chief reason for the appointment of Joshua to succeed Moses in the government of Israel was, that he was a man having within him "the Spirit" of God; and the most honourable testimony made concerning him at his decease was, that he was "the servant of the Lord,"—a memorial which was divinely indited for his epitaph; not General Joshua, nor Judge Joshua, nor Prince Joshua, but "JOSHUA, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD."

3. Household religion involves *the daily performance of family worship*. The first instance of religious devotion after the fall occurred in the family of Adam, when Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord, and Adam officiated as their priest. The first altar erected after the flood was built by Noah, for himself and his household. Wherever Abraham sojourned, he no sooner pitched his tent to shelter his family from the noonday sun and the evening dews, than he "built an altar, and called on the name of the Lord." Job "rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings, according to the number of his sons and daughters." "Thus did Job continually." When David had removed the ark from the house of Obbedom, and placed it in a tabernacle which he had prepared for it in Jerusalem, he "returned to bless his household;" *i. e.*, says Henry, "to pray with them and for them, and to offer up his family-thanksgiving for this national mercy." These several examples may be justly regarded as a true exposition of the import of Joshua's resolution, with respect to its devotional character. And the duty thus implied in it is virtually inculcated and solemnly enforced in the inspired imprecation of Jeremiah, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name."

Prayer and praise are expressly enjoined in the New Testament. "I would that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing, and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." These directions are general; but we have good authority for asserting

that they were understood by the early Christians as including daily religious worship in the family. In those palmy days of Christianity, we are informed that, "at an early hour in the morning, the family was assembled, when a portion of Scripture was read, which was followed by a hymn and prayer." "In the evening, before retiring to rest, the family again assembled, when the same form of worship was observed as in the morning, with this difference, that the service was considerably protracted beyond the time which could be conveniently allotted to it in the commencement of the day." Much more to the same effect might be quoted from reliable authorities, with interesting and instructive details, including the practice of asking a blessing and returning thanks at their meals. The habitual neglect of religious worship in the household would have been considered as being little short of a practical renunciation of Christianity.

The excellent Directory for Worship which forms a part of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, ought to receive more attention than we fear is given to it by many in our communion. That which pertains to family worship is as follows: "Family worship, which ought to be performed by every family, ordinarily, morning and evening, consists in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and singing praises. The head of the family, who is to lead in this service, ought to be careful that all the members of his household duly attend, and that none withdraw themselves unnecessarily from any part of family worship, and that all refrain from their common business while the Scriptures are read, and gravely attend to the same, no less than when prayer or praise is offered up."

4. Household religion includes *faithful religious instruction*. This was enjoined by Moses in explicit terms. "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy 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 thine 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." Joshua was present when these injunctions were uttered; and there can be no question that he was faithful in carrying them into effect in his own household. Without it, his family could not have served the Lord intelligently. The words of Moses enjoin not only frequent formal instruction in the divine law, but daily religious conversation. They must give "line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." They must also write down his words (the Pentateuch was not then printed) and let them occupy conspicuous places on their persons and premises, in order that their own recollections might be kept constantly awake, and that their children and servants might always have before them the great truths of God's holy law. It is

not surprising that a people thus instructed should, as Josephus testifies, become as familiar with the sacred oracles as they were with their own names.

From the practice of Jewish parents, we may learn the spirit of our Lord's injunction, "Search the Scriptures." We should do this privately, for our own personal benefit, and in the presence of our households, with a view to their instruction in divine things. We will quote again from our Directory for Worship. "Let the heads of families be careful to instruct their children and servants in the principles of religion. Every proper opportunity ought to be embraced for such instruction. But we are of opinion, that the Sabbath evenings, after public worship, should be sacredly preserved for this purpose. Therefore, we highly disapprove of paying unnecessary visits on the Lord's Day, admitting strangers into the families, except when necessity or charity requires it; or any other practices, whatever plausible pretences may be offered in their favour, if they interfere with the above important and necessary duty."

5. Household religion implies *proper parental restraint and correction*. Joshua could not secure the fulfilment of his resolution that his house should serve the Lord, except by the exercise of his legitimate authority over them, in connection with the use of other appropriate means for promoting their spiritual good. He must keep them from idol-temples. He must restrain them from vice and immorality, and from unnecessary exposures to temptation. He must rebuke and chastise them, if he saw them going astray. This course was pursued by Abraham, the father of the faithful, and God approved of his conduct. "I know Abraham," said Jehovah, "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." Solomon was inspired to give similar directions to parents, "Train up a child in the way he should go;" not in the way he *would* go, for to *err* is the natural tendency of our fallen humanity; but in the way he *should* go; "and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Again, "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell."

Kind parental counsels are to be employed, either with or without the use of authority and correction, according to circumstances; and correction is not to be resorted to until reproof and counsel fail. But experience and observation show that children cannot always be restrained from sin, and kept in the path of virtue, without the exercise of more or less severity. Eli's "sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." He counselled and reproofed them; he expostulated with them; but to no effect. If, in addition to these remonstrances, he had firmly and faithfully interposed his parental and official authority, and had proceeded to punish his wicked sons as their offences deserved, and particularly

if he had done this when they were children, he might have rescued his family, his office, and the cause of religion from much reproach and injury. It is reported of the eldest son of President Edwards, that while congratulating a friend on having a family of sons, he said to him with much earnestness, "Remember, there is but one mode of family government. I have brought up and educated fourteen boys; two I suffered to grow up without the rod. One of these was my youngest brother, and the other was Aaron Burr, my sister's only son—both having lost their parents in their childhood; and from both my observation and experience, I tell you, sir, a maple sugar treatment will never answer. Beware how you let the first act of disobedience go unpunished."

We need scarcely remark (it is so obvious), that punishment ought never to be inflicted in a passion, or out of due proportion to the nature of the offence. It should be performed conscientiously and religiously, in a kind and benevolent spirit, and with earnest prayer to God that he would bless the chastisement for their spiritual and eternal good. We know a lady who was successful in family government, concerning whom it was said by one of her friends, that she *kissed* her children into subjection. This remark was true so far as it described her kindness and affection towards them. But kissing did not always produce the desired effect, and then she resorted to the rod, or some other mode of punishment. But when she inflicted chastisement, it was done as a religious duty, accompanied by prayer with and for them, that the Lord would subdue their wills and give them new hearts.

6. Household religion requires of parents a *pious dedication of their children to God in the ordinance of baptism; and a diligent use of all the other means of grace appointed in God's word.* The seal of infant dedication in the Old Testament Church was circumcision, but in the New it is baptism. The two ordinances agree in this, that they are both signs and seals of the covenant of grace, and involve a solemn engagement to be the Lord's. In the administration of the ordinance to infants, the parents make this engagement in their behalf; and as a part of what is implied in it, they promise to maintain household religion. The Church has always been composed of families, embracing parents who profess the true religion, and their offspring. Hence circumcision, though an initiatory ecclesiastical rite, belonged to the household. And so of baptism. In three instances household baptism is distinctly mentioned in Scripture. The prompt and pious observance of this ordinance is therefore a part of household religion, and a suitable introduction to the other religious duties which devolve on Christian parents with regard to their children.

As soon as children are old enough to understand, *they should be taught the nature and design of their baptism, and how they ought to improve it as a means of grace.* The relation of baptism to the Lord's Supper, should also be explained to them. They

should be told of their obligations to devote the morning of their lives to the service of God; be earnestly exhorted to trust in Jesus Christ, as their Redeemer, and to ratify their baptismal dedication to him in their infancy, *by a public profession of their faith, and a devout reception of the Lord's Supper.* The relation of circumcision to the Passover, was analogous to that which exists between baptism and the Lord's Supper; and the Passover, though a public church ordinance, was celebrated in a household capacity, and by all the members thereof, who had been circumcised, and were otherwise qualified to partake of it. And for their being duly prepared, the heads of Jewish households were, in a great measure, responsible. Preparation for the Passover was, therefore, an important part of household religion, and this was accordingly implied in Joshua's resolution, that his house should serve the Lord. The paschal lamb was a type of Christ, and those who partook of that ordinance, expressed their faith, not only in the true God, but in the Messiah, and in his atoning sacrifice. Hence, the resolution of Joshua involved a solemn purpose to make his house, as far as he might be able, worshippers of God, and believers in his Son. In harmony with this, Christian parents ought to bring before the minds of their children what is implied in the worthy partaking of the Lord's Supper, and their duty with regard to it, and to endeavour to prepare them, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, for receiving this holy ordinance in the exercise of a true and living faith.

We have already spoken of family prayer as a part of household religion. We add now the further remark, that parents ought not only to pray with and for their children, but to *enjoin upon their children, the duty of praying for themselves.* Philip Henry, father of the commentator, Matthew Henry, frequently gave his children this advice: "Be sure you look to your secret duty" [*i. e.*, prayer]; "keep that up, whatever you do; the soul cannot prosper in the neglect of it. Apostasy generally begins at the closet door." Prayer is offering up to God our *desires*, and not a mere form of *words*. Yet it is difficult to pray without language; and more so for children than adults. Hence, in teaching them how to perform this duty, parents will find it necessary to prescribe suitable words, in the use of which their children may be trained to the habit of devotion. They should, of course, be taught that their hearts must be engaged as well as their lips, in order to render their prayers acceptable to God. But the serious repetition of devotional words, is often blessed of God to affect the heart; sometimes in producing a saving change, and at others in making a valuable and permanent, if not a saving impression. The distinguished American statesman, John Randolph, once said to an intimate friend, "I used to be called a Frenchman, because I took the French side in politics; and, though this was unjust, yet the truth is, I should have been a French atheist, if it had not been

for one recollection, and that was, the memory of the time when my departed mother used to take my little hands in hers, and cause me on my knees to say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

A further means of grace which parents ought to employ for the benefit of their households, is to require of them the *proper observance of the Christian Sabbath, by a suspension of business and worldly recreations, by reading God's Word, and a regular attendance upon the public ministrations of the Gospel.* The divine command, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," is as obligatory on households, as on individuals. Heads of families are required not only to sanctify the day themselves, but to take good care to have it sacredly observed by their children and servants. This is distinctly enjoined in the original law of the Sabbath: "In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." This law was designed to prohibit worldly recreations, as well as secular business. It is thus interpreted by Divine inspiration: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words." (Isa. 58 : 13.)

But in addition to abstaining from labour and amusements, the proper sanctification of the Sabbath requires us to spend the day in religious services. They are both mentioned together in the divine command, "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord." This statute was conscientiously observed by pious Israelites; and it received the sanction of our Lord; who "as his custom was, went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." This was practised also by his disciples, not only during his sojourn on earth, but after his death and resurrection. Christ appeared to them several times, on the evening of the first day of the week, as they were assembled for worship. Paul preached again and again on that day, directed that Christians should not forsake the assembling of themselves together, and that collections should then be made for charitable uses. John calls it the "Lord's day," and he observed it in a devout and holy manner. The law of the Sabbath thus expounded by the practice of Christ and his Apostles, was regarded by the primitive Church as being of perpetual obligation. In the famous letter of Pliny to the Roman Emperor, he says, that they were accustomed to assemble on the first day of the week, and sing hymns to Christ, as to God. And we add, that with regard to their families, they followed the example of Old Testament believers, who, when they publicly appeared before the Lord, took with them their "wives, and children, and little ones." This noble example ought to be imitated now, by every Christian community. The great congregation of worshippers in the sanctuary, should consist

of households; and these should be whole and entire, and not broken fragments—the parents for instance, while their children are permitted to remain at home; or one or two members of the family, while the remainder spend the Sabbath in recreation. “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” And he accordingly loves the dwellings of Jacob, when their inmates show the sincerity and fervour of their household devotions, by delighting to throng the gates of Zion. The sacred fire on their domestic altars, when thus kindled afresh in the temple, is made to burn with a purer and more heavenly flame, and on their return, they carry back the coals of a new consecration, to render more holy and sanctifying their household worship.

II. We will now adduce some motives to influence parents and heads of families to maintain *household religion*; or in other words, to adopt as their own, and to carry into practical effect, Joshua’s resolution to *serve the Lord*.

1. The great end of household religion, viz., serving the Lord, is the *highest object for which intelligent beings ought to live*. Hence parents and heads of families are under solemn obligations to God, to acknowledge him as their God, and the God of their households, by such acts as manifest their belief in his existence and attributes, their supreme veneration for his character, and their profound regard for his authority. To live without religion is practical atheism, and parents who have no religion in their families, teach their children, so far as their own example goes, to be atheists. They virtually say, that there is no being in the universe whom they are bound to worship. Such persons are rebuked by the very heathen, who teach their children, both by precept and example, to pay homage to idols. Let the multitudes in this Christian land, who bring up their children without any religious recognition of the only living and true God, consider the unreasonableness of their conduct. “The God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways, they do not glorify.” They do not mention his name religiously to their offspring, though “children are a heritage of the Lord.”

Some may probably reply, that they worship God in secret. This is highly important. But if they have no family religion, their households, as such, live “without God in the world.” Their children witness no religious acts, by which their parents are distinguished from the veriest infidels. Is not this treating God with neglect and dishonour? Others, perhaps, may say, that they avoid teaching their children religion, in order that they may learn and judge for themselves, when they arrive at mature age. This is a serious mistake. On any other subject except religion, it is universally regarded as preposterous. Let it be understood, that by teaching religion, we do not mean coercion, but the communication of scriptural light and knowledge; such instruction and influence,

such precepts and examples, as will give their minds the right direction, and furnish them with the requisite materials for forming a correct and enlightened judgment. This is a duty which cannot be neglected, without a practical denial of the true God, and of his claims to our service. It is not possible, therefore, for parents to frame a valid excuse for withholding from their children proper instruction concerning the character of God, and their relations and obligations to him. The knowledge of God is the most important of all knowledge, and the service of God is the most reasonable of all claims. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master : if then I be a father, where is mine honour ? and if I be a master, where is my fear ? saith the Lord of hosts." Having then in view the high and holy end of glorifying God, we remark,

2. That household religion is very important to parents and heads of families, *as indicative of their own desire and purpose to serve the Lord, and also as an aid and encouragement thereto.* Notice for example family worship, which is an essential part of household religion. Those parents who habitually neglect this duty, seldom worship God in secret, and the habitual neglect of secret devotion, indicates the absence of piety in the heart, and even of a desire to become pious. It is therefore a hopeful sign when men begin to offer prayer to God. "Behold he prayeth," was mentioned by the Lord concerning Saul of Tarsus, as indicating that his inward feelings had undergone a great and glorious change. This change was visible ; and it will be so, more or less, in every other case, where a disposition to pray has been implanted in the soul. Even when the change has not yet become radical, but there is only an earnest desire to become pious, a resort to the closet for secret prayer is an almost invariable consequence. Suppose heads of households to have arrived at the point of a sincere and prayerful desire to serve God ; if, in addition to daily prayer in their closets, they erect the family altar and maintain regularly the worship of God in their households, the happy tendency of this course will be to increase their desire, and to ripen it into a solemn and fixed resolution, in reliance on divine grace, to devote themselves to the service of the Lord.

3. Household religion will generally secure *the filial obedience of children to their parents, and brotherly love and affection towards each other.* The Bible enjoins upon children to obey and honour their parents ; but it also requires parents to train up their children in a religious manner, and thus secure these happy results. "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath : but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." By the Jewish law, "a stubborn and rebellious son" was to be stoned to death. But this law was predicated on the fact that his parents had "chastened him, and he would not hearken unto them." Of course it implied the duty of parental fidelity in maintaining this part of household religion. This was a vital point ; and the silence of Scripture his-

tory, with regard to these extreme cases, shows that faithfulness on the part of parents, seldom failed to render their children obedient and dutiful.

And further, as parents are the common bond of union between the members of the household, it follows that where parental authority is maintained on religious principles, and these principles are impressed on the minds of their children, the impressions thus made, are not only reciprocated towards their parents, in the form of filial love and obedience, but are sensibly and sweetly felt among themselves in all their domestic intercourse. This is especially so, when household religion assumes a devotional aspect; when the head of the family becomes the medium of conveying the common wants and desires of all present to the throne of divine grace; and when all unite with him in songs of praise and thanksgiving to God for mercies received. An affection is thus kindled for each other of a more sacred character than is possible to be produced without the benign influence of religious devotion.

4. Household religion will exert an important influence in *rendering our children respectable and useful members of society*. Intelligence and virtue are the two pillars on which society rests; and the household is the place where the materials are to be moulded for future use. If parents suffer their families to grow up in ignorance and irreligion, they must blame themselves if their children, who ought to be their honour and pride, shall bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. They may leave their children rich patrimonies, but, if they lack early intellectual and moral training, they can never, except by a rare combination of circumstances, acquire those qualifications which fit them for important social positions. It was remarked by an old author, that "golden citizens, who will make golden laws, and practise golden principles, are far more valuable than golden metal." Such citizens constitute a nation's wealth; and they generally proceed from households in which due care was taken to form their characters according to the principles of God's Word. The divine precept, "Honour the king," is placed in immediate juxtaposition with the command, "Fear God;" thereby teaching us that good citizenship is closely connected with a religious reverence for the Divine Being. Hence the importance of household religion, where this reverence is daily inculcated. In such a country as ours, where all the people are rulers, as well as citizens, the importance of household religion is incalculable. Our civil government is like the wheels in Ezekiel's vision, "a wheel in the middle of a wheel;" and if these wheels are controlled by men who have not the fear of God before their eyes, what can be anticipated but disaster and ruin? Let parents and heads of families consider the important relation which they sustain to the future citizens of our land, and to the destiny of our country; and let their patriotism, as well as their piety, prompt them to give to the rising generation the advantages and benefits of

household religion. "What man is he that feareth the Lord?" "his seed shall inherit the earth:" *i. e.* they shall be prosperous, honourable, and useful.

5. Household religion is *God's ordinary method of perpetuating his Church, and transmitting the true religion from one generation to another.* The reason assigned in the Second Commandment for prohibiting idolatry, is both awful and blessed in its import. "For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." The fearful curse which is here pronounced upon ungodly households ought to excite the apprehension of those parents, who "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator;" who teach their children to set a high value on worldly possessions, but to place a low estimate on spiritual things; who run riot in sinful pleasures, but take no thought to secure for themselves or their families an interest in Christ.

But, not to dwell on this awful picture, let us consider the pleasing converse of this, in the promise of mercy to the descendants of those who love God and keep his commandments. This has been remarkably fulfilled, by the manner in which the history of the Church has moved on in grand parallel with family genealogies. From the calling of Abraham to the advent of Christ there were forty-two generations. Of these the Bible furnishes two distinct records, with the design of showing the genealogy of our Lord; but giving incidentally the progress of the Church during that period. These records illustrate the interesting fact that the covenant which was made with Abraham and his household, and his seed after him, embraced his seed, not merely as individuals, but as households; and they also teach the instructive lesson that the ecclesiastical and spiritual benefits of that covenant were preserved from one generation to another, by God's blessing on the moral influences of household religion. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, according to the conditions of the Abrahamic covenant, successively commanded their children and households after them to keep the way of the Lord; and, in conformity with these acts of household piety, God was pleased to announce his gracious purpose of perpetuating his Church through their families; saying "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" while this high privilege was lost to the posterity of Ishmael, Lot, and Esau, on account of their criminal neglect of religious duty.

The blessing of Abraham has come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ; and the same principle is in operation under the Gospel dispensation as in the Old Testament church. It was concerning Gospel times that the prophetic promise was made, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them and their children after them." "The chil-

dren of thy servant shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." We have known a pious family (and there are doubtless many such families) who could distinctly trace their descent for nearly two hundred years; and they could show by authentic records, that their ancestors during that entire period had been pious. Though God is able of stones to raise up children unto Abraham, he usually proceeds on the principle which we are now illustrating; and it furnishes a powerful motive for maintaining household religion. The inheritance of grace is incomparably more valuable to our descendants than any earthly possession.

6. Household religion is the appropriate means *for preparing parents and their families for heaven.* To show this, nothing further is necessary than to restate the several particulars in which household religion consists; viz., the possession of personal piety by the heads of families; a public profession of faith in Christ; the daily performance of family worship; the faithful religious instruction of their children; proper parental restraint and correction; a pious dedication of their children to God in the ordinance of baptism; succeeded by a diligent use of all the other means of grace appointed in God's Word; such as teaching them to improve in a right manner their infant baptism, preparing them to become worthy recipients of the Lord's Supper, and enjoining upon them the duty of praying for themselves; and finally, the requisition that they properly observe the Christian Sabbath, by a suspension of business and worldly recreation, by reading God's Word, and by a regular attendance upon the public ministrations of the Gospel. These are all scriptural means of grace and salvation, and if performed in a right manner, they involve a true Christian experience; while with reference to parents and heads of families, the entire discussion is predicated upon their own sincere and pious purpose, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to serve the Lord. With regard to themselves, therefore, these means are designed, for the most part, to promote their sanctification, rather than their conversion; and they have a sufficient scripture-warrant for their further use in securing the conversion and salvation of their children.

Let parents exercise faith in God's holy covenant, and in his gracious promises to those who are faithful in the discharge of Christian duty. Let them pray and labour for the conversion of their children, and persevere therein amidst all discouragements and delays. "In due season they shall reap, if they faint not." The following is a forcible illustration of God's mercy and grace in this particular. "The Rev. A. D. Merrill states, that there was once a pious father with seven children, who had maintained the worship of God in his family, until all his children had grown up to mature years, and not one of them had been as yet converted to God. At last the old man's faith began to fail in relation to the promise; and growing 'weary and faint in his mind,' he resolved to give up family worship, and confine his devotions to the closet,

and to leave his children to do as they pleased. But before proceeding to do this, he determined to call his children together once more, and explain to them his reasons for this course. Taking up the 'old family Bible,' from which he had so often read to them 'the words of eternal life,' he thus addressed them: 'My children, you know that from your earliest recollection I have been accustomed to call you together around this altar for family worship. I have endeavoured to instruct you in the ways of the Lord, and to imbue your minds with the truth. But you have all grown up, and not one of you is converted to God. You are yet in your sins, and show no signs of penitence. I feel discouraged, and have concluded to make no further efforts for your salvation—to demolish my family altar—to confine my devotions to my closet, and thus endeavour still to work out my own salvation, while I leave you to yourselves.' Upon his speaking thus, first one and then another fell upon their knees, and besought him that he would not do as he proposed, but that he would continue to pray for them, and that he would do it now; for they were now ready to give their hearts to God. He bowed with them. The Holy Spirit descended, and before they rose from their knees, they were all rejoicing in the Lord. One of their number who was married, and away from home, upon returning on a visit, and hearing what great things the Lord had done for the rest of the family, likewise became anxious for her soul, and gave her heart to Christ. Thus they were all saved, and the covenant promise fulfilled."

What a cheering fact! A whole family converted as the fruit of parental faithfulness! A whole household made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, to the inheritance of heaven! How wonderfully changed their prospects! Before, they were children of wrath, as all ungodly households are now! The wrath of God abiding on them, and they constantly exposed to his eternal wrath! How indescribably awful is the thought of a household congregating in hell! The rich man mentioned by our Lord greatly dreaded the presence of his former family associates. "I pray thee, therefore, father [Abraham], that thou wouldst send him [Lazarus] to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." If parents fear to meet their children in perdition, where they will be the accusers and tormentors of each other forever, let them first come to Christ themselves, and then lead their families to him, that they may thus be made the common partakers of his salvation.

The assembling of households in heaven will be a joyful meeting. Parents appear there more venerable than when in hoary age they received the filial regards and attentions of kind and dutiful children, while every indication of infirmity and decay has forever departed, and they are as verdant, healthful, and vigorous as in their early manhood. Around them are their once happy children, of all ages, from the buoyant youth to tender infancy—children

still in gentleness, docility, and beauty, but ripe, or rapidly maturing in divine wisdom and knowledge. Family ties, once severed by death, are reunited, never again to be broken. Their tears, often shed below, are forever wiped from their eyes, and their countenances, which were here so often sorrowful, now beam with ecstatic joy. While in the flesh, they may have toiled hard, yet have received as their daily pittance less than was needful for the comfortable supply of their bodily wants. But now "they rest from their labours," they eat freely of "the hidden manna," and they drink of "the water of life." On earth, they may have occupied an humble domicile—now they have apartments in the "King's palace." In this world, their clothing may have been coarse and homely—now they are "brought to the King in raiment of needlework;" their "clothing is of wrought gold." While passing through this life, their habitations were not always luminous with their Redeemer's presence, even when they were offering him their homage. At best, they saw "through a glass darkly;" and sometimes, for just cause, he temporarily hid from them the light of his countenance. But now they see him "face to face;" they behold the "King in his beauty;" they are daily in "his temple;" they unceasingly celebrate his praise. With such glorious hopes as these, let Christian parents be prompted to perform with constancy and zeal the several duties involved in HOUSEHOLD RELIGION.

ARTICLE II.

THE VALUE OF A GOOD WIFE.

BY THE REV. THOMAS BRAINEED, D.D., OF PHILADELPHIA.*

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. So that he shall have no need of spoil."—PROV. 31 : 11.

THE richest blessings are not always the most obvious. It is the hidden moisture which refreshes the flower. It is the hidden spring which supplies the well. It is the nutriment, buried in the earth, which feeds the fibres of the vine and tree, and thus develops the nourishing grape and the shady oak. The noisy cataract is not so beneficent as the gentle rill that glides almost without a murmur, and is best known by the lively green of its border, and the flowers which deck its meandering course. In the lightning's flash there is sublimity, but in usefulness it yields to the gentle taper, that lights up a cottage evening. Mankind are moved by exhibitions of power. They are affected by social changes, which

* A Sermon preached in Pine Street Church, Philadelphia, on the sudden death of a female member of the Church.