

Thou and Thy House, or The Christian Home

by C. H. M.

Preface

In sending forth a new edition of the following tract, the writer has only to say that twelve months' close and prayerful consideration of the doctrine therein contained, has tended to strengthen his convictions of its truth and importance. He believes the tract to be, in the main, according to the revealed mind of God. That there are imperfections, in detail, he most fully admits; but he would earnestly entreat the Christian reader to look at the tract as a whole, and not to allow his judgment to be warped by attached passages which, it may be, through the infirmity of the writer, are imperfectly expressed; or, through that of the reader, are imperfectly understood. We are all feeble, erring mortals, and, hence, we would need the constant exercise of patience and forbearance; and, although we may not be able, conscientiously, to agree with all the principles contained in a book or tract, we should, nevertheless, hold ourselves in readiness to receive and profit by whatever truth it may set before us. To reject, or treat with indifference, an entire document, because of some clause therein which we cannot understand or adopt, argues a narrow mind, or a warped judgment, either of which is utterly unworthy of one who has been endowed, by grace divine, with "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7) We are called to "try the things that differ," and to "hold fast that which is good."

But while the reader will need to exercise an impartial judgment, the writer feels it imperative upon him to remove, so far as in him lies, every stumbling-block out of the way. This he has earnestly sought to do, in the preparation of this edition, by removing or altering expressions which seemed likely to be misunderstood, and which, indeed, have been interpreted in a way which he never intended. He has, also, in a note or two, ventured to offer a few additional suggestions to those who are called of God to the solemn and important ministry of training the young, in which he sincerely desires, according to his measure, to be their fellow-helper.

May the Lord pour out His rich blessing upon all Christian parents, teachers, and guardians, that they may be enabled to discharge their interesting functions, in His presence, through His grace, and to His glory; and that their hearts may be encouraged by seeing abundant fruit amongst those over whom they are placed. Blessed be His name, He has, during the past year or two, given many Christian parents to say, in reference to their household, "He hath been mindful of us; and

He will bless us."

May our hearts be filled with praise for the past, and confidence for the future. C. H. M.

There are two houses which occupy a very prominent place on the page of inspiration, and these are, the house of God, and the house of God's servant. God attaches immense importance to His house; and justly so, because it is His. His truth, His honor, His character, His glory, are all involved in the character of His house; and hence it is His desire that the impress of what He is should plainly appear on that which belongs to Him. If God has a house, it assuredly should be a godly house, a holy house, a spiritual house, an elevated house, a pure and heavenly house. It should be all this, not merely in abstract position and principle, but practically and characteristically. Its abstract position is founded upon what God has made it, and where He has set it; but its practical character is founded upon the actual walk of those who form its constituent parts down here upon this earth.

Now, while many minds may be prepared to enter into the truth and importance of all the principles connected with God's house, there may be but few, comparatively, who are disposed to give a due measure of attention to those connected with the house of God's servant; although, if one were asked the question, What house stands next in order to the house of God? he should, undoubtedly, reply, The house of His servant. However, as there is nothing like bringing the holy authority of God's word to bear upon the conscience, I shall quote a few passages of Scripture, which will tend to show, in a clear and forcible point of view, what are God's thoughts about the house of one holding connection with Him.

When the iniquity of the antediluvian world had risen to a head, and the end of all flesh had come before a righteous God, who was about to roll the heavy tide of judgment over the corrupted scene, these sweet words fell upon Noah's ear, "Come thou and *all thy house* into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation." (Gen. 7:1) Now, it will be said, that Noah was a type of Christ—the righteous head of a saved family—saved in virtue of their association with him. All this is fully granted: but Noah's typical character does not, in any wise, interfere with the principle which I seek to deduce from this and kindred passages, which principle, I shall here, at the outset, distinctly lay down—it is this: *the house of every servant of God is, in virtue of its connection with Him, brought into a position of privilege and consequent responsibility.**

[*Note: The reader will not, I trust, imagine that the necessity for the

work of the Holy Ghost in the regeneration of the children of Christian parents, is denied or interfered with. God forbid! "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is as true of a Christian's child as of every one else. Grace is not hereditary. The sum of what I would press upon Christian parents is, that Scripture inseparably links a man with his house, and that the Christian parent is warranted in counting upon God for his children, and responsible to train his children for God. Let any one who denies this interpret Ephesians 6:4.]

That this is a principle involving vast practical consequences we shall, with God's blessing and grace, see, ere we close this paper; but we must first seek to establish its truth from the Word of God. Were we merely left to argue from analogy, our thesis might be easily proved; for it could never be supposed, by any mind at all acquainted with the character and ways of God, that He would attach such unspeakable importance to His own house, and attach none at all, or almost none, to that of His servant. This were impossible; it would be utterly unlike God; and God must always act like Himself. But we are not left to analogy on this most important and deeply practical question; and the passage just quoted forms one of the first of a series of direct and positive proofs. In it we find those immensely significant words, "*Thou and thy house,*" inseparably linked together. God did not reveal a salvation for Noah which was of no avail to Noah's house. He never contemplated such a thing. The same ark that lay open to him lay open to them also. Why? Was it because they had faith? No; but because *he* had, and they were connected with him. God gave him a blank check for himself and his family, and it devolved upon him to fill it up by bringing them in along with him. I repeat it, this does not in the least interfere with Noah's typical character. I look at him typically; but I look at him personally also. Nor can I, under any circumstances separate a man from his house. The house of God is brought into blessing and responsibility because of its connection with Him; and the house of the servant of God is brought into blessing and responsibility because of its connection with him. This is our thesis.

The next passage to which I shall refer occurs in the life of Abraham. "And the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?...For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.'" (Gen. 18:17-19) Here it is not a question of salvation, but of communion with the mind and purposes of God; and let the Christian parent note and solemnly ponder the fact, that when God was seeking out a man to whom He could disclose His secret counsels, He selected one possessing the simple characteristic of "commanding his children and his household." This, to a tender

conscience, cannot fail to prove a most pungent principle. If there is one point above another in which Christians have failed, it is in this very point of commanding their children and household. They surely have not set God before them in this particular; for, if I look at the entire record of God's dealings with His house, I find them invariably characterised by the exercise of power on the principle of righteousness. He has firmly established and unflinchingly carried out His holy authority. It matters not what the outward aspect or character of His house may be, the essential principle of His dealing with it is immutable. "Thy testimonies are very sure, holiness becometh thy house, O LORD, *forever*." Now, the servant must ever take his Master as his model; and if God rules His house with power exercised in righteousness, so must I; for if I am, in any one particular of my conduct, different from Him, I must, in that particular, be wrong. This is plain.

But not only does God so rule His house: He likewise loves, approves of, and treats with His marked and honoured confidence, those who do the same. In the above passage, we find Him saying, "I cannot hide my purposes from Abraham." Why? Is it because of his personal grace or faith? No; but simply because "he will command his children and his household." A man who knows how to command his house is worthy of God's confidence. This is a stupendous truth, the edge of which should pierce the conscience of many a Christian parent. Many of us, alas! with our eye resting on Genesis 18:19, may well prostrate ourselves before the One who uttered and penned that word, and cry out Failure! failure! shameful, humiliating failure! And why is this? Why have we failed to meet the solemn responsibility devolving upon us in reference to the due command of our households? I believe there is but one reply, viz., because we have failed to realize, by faith, the privilege conferred upon those households in virtue of their association with us. It is remarkable that our two earliest proofs should present to our view, with such accuracy, the two grand divisions of our question, namely, privilege and responsibility. In Noah's case, the word was, "Thou and thy house" in the place of salvation; in Abraham's case, it was "Thou and thy house" in the place of moral government. The connection is at once marked and beautiful, and the man who fails in faith to appropriate the privilege will fail in moral power to answer the responsibility. God looks upon a man's house as part of himself, and he cannot, in the smallest degree, whether in principle or practice, disregard the connection without suffering serious damage, and also marring the testimony.

Now, the question for the Christian parent's conscience really is, *Am I counting upon God for my house, and ruling my house for God?* A solemn question, surely; yet, it is to be feared very few feel its

magnitude and power. And here, perhaps, my reader may feel disposed to demand fuller Scripture proof than has yet been adduced, as to our warrant for counting upon God for our houses. I shall, therefore proceed with the scripture quotations. I give one from the history of Jacob. "And God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel.'" This would seem to have been addressed to Jacob personally; but he never thought, for a moment, of disconnecting himself from his family, either as to privilege or responsibility; wherefore it is immediately added: "Jacob said unto *his household*, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise, and go up to Bethel." (Gen. 35:1-3) Here we see that a call to Jacob put Jacob's house under responsibility. He was called to go up to God's house, and the question immediately suggested itself to his conscience whether his own house were in a fit condition to respond to such a call.

We now turn to the opening chapters of the book of Exodus, where we find that one of Pharaoh's four objections to the full deliverance and separation of Israel, had specific reference to "the little ones." "And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh; and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God; but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young, and with our old, with our sons, and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; *for* we must hold a feast unto the LORD." (Exod. 10:8, 9)

The reason why they should take the little ones and all with them, was because they were going to hold a feast unto the Lord. Nature might say, Oh, what can these little creatures know about a feast unto the Lord? Are you not afraid of making them formalists? The reply of Moses is simple and decisive—"We will go with our young...*for* we must hold a feast unto the LORD." They had no idea of seeking one thing for themselves, and another for their children. They dreamed not of Canaan for themselves and Egypt for their children. How could they taste the manna of the wilderness, or the old corn of the land, while their children were feeding upon the leeks, the onions, and the garlic of Egypt? Impossible. Moses and Aaron understood not such acting. They felt that God's call to them was a call to their little ones; and, moreover, were it not fully carried out, they would no sooner have gone forth from Egypt by one road than their children would draw them back by another. That such would have been the case, Satan was but too well aware, and hence appears the reason of the objection, "Not so, go now, *ye that are men*." This is the very thing which so many professing Christians are doing (or attempting rather to do) at this present time. They profess to go forth themselves to serve the Lord, but their little ones are in Egypt. They profess to have taken "three days' journey into the wilderness;" in other words, they profess to have left the world, they profess to be dead to it, and risen with Christ, as

the possessors of a heavenly life, and the heirs and expectants of a heavenly glory; but they leave their little ones behind, in the hands of Pharaoh, or rather of Satan.* They have given up the world for themselves, but they cannot do so for their children. Hence, on Lord's day, the professed position of strangers and pilgrims is taken; hymns are sung, prayers uttered, and principles taught which bespeak a people far advanced in the heavenly life, and just on the borders of Canaan, in actual experience (in spirit, of course, they are already there); but alas! on Monday morning, every act, every habit, every pursuit, every object, contradicts all this. The little ones are trained for the world. The scope, aim, object, and entire character of their education is worldly, in the truest and strictest sense of the word. Moses and Aaron would not have understood such actings, and neither indeed should any morally honest heart, or upright mind, understand them. I should have no other principle, portion, or prospect, for my children, but what I have for myself; nor should I train them with a view to any other. If Christ and heavenly glory are sufficient for me, they are sufficient for them likewise; but then the proof that they are really sufficient for me, should be unequivocal. The tone of the parent's character should be such as to afford not a shadow of a doubt as to the real deep-seated purpose and object of his soul.

[*Note: It will be said that there cannot be any analogy between the actual removal of people from one country to another, and the training of our children. I reply, the analogy only applies in principle. It is perfectly evident that we cannot take our children to heaven in the sense in which the Israelites took theirs to Canaan. God alone can fit our children for heaven, by implanting in them the life of His own Son; and He alone can bring them to heaven, in His own time. But, then, although we can neither fit our children for, nor bring them to, heaven, we can, nevertheless, by faith, train them for it; and it is not merely our *duty* (a poor, cold, and unworthy expression) but our high and holy *privilege* so to do. Hence, therefore, if the principle on which, and the object with which, we train our children are manifestly worldly, we do, virtually, and so far as in us lies, leave them in the world. And, on the other hand, if our principle and object are, unequivocally, heavenly, then do we, so far as in us lies, train them for heaven. This, my beloved reader, is all that is meant, in this tract, by leaving our children in Egypt or taking them to Canaan. We are responsible to train our children, though we cannot convert them; and God will assuredly bless the faithful training of those whom He has graciously given us.]

But what shall my child say to me, if I tell him that I am earnestly seeking Christ and heaven for him while, at the same time, I am educating him for the world? Which will he believe? Which will exert the more powerful practical influence on his heart and life—my words,

or my acts. Let conscience reply; and oh, let it be an honest reply, a reply emanating from its deepest depths, a reply which will unanswerably demonstrate that the question is understood in all its pungency and power. I verily believe the time is come for plain dealing with one another's conscience. It must be apparent to every prayerful and attentive observer of the Christianity of the present day, that it wears a most sickly aspect; that the tone is miserably low; and, in a word, that there must be something radically wrong. As to testimony for the Son of God, it is rarely—alas, how rarely!—thought of. Personal salvation seems to form the very highest object with ninety-nine out of every hundred professing Christians, as if we were left here to be saved; and not, as saved ones, to glorify Christ.

Now, I would affectionately, yet faithfully, suggest the question, whether much of the failure in practical testimony for Christ is not justly traceable to the neglect of the principle involved in the expression, "Thou and thy house." I cannot but think it has much to do with it. One thing is certain, that a quantity of worldliness, confusion, and moral evil has crept in amongst us through our little ones having been left in Egypt. We see many who, it may be, ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago, took a prominent place in testimony and service, and seemed to have their hearts much in the work, are now gone back lamentably, not having power to keep their own heads above water, much less to help any one else. All this utters a warning voice for Christian parents having rising families; and the utterance is, "BEWARE OF LEAVING YOUR LITTLE ONES IN EGYPT." Many a heart-broken father, at the present moment, is left to weep and groan over his fatal mistake, in reference to his household. He left them in Egypt, in an evil hour, and under a gross delusion, and now when he ventures, it may be in real faithfulness and earnest affection, to drop a word into the ear of those who have grown up around him, they meet it with a deaf ear, and an indifferent heart, while they cling with vigour and decision to that Egypt in which he faithlessly and inconsistently left them. This is a stern fact, the statement of which may send a pang to many a heart; but truth must be told, in order that, though it wounds some, it may prove a salutary warning to others. But I must proceed with the proofs.*

[*Note: There is, I should say, a very serious error involved in a Christian parent's committing the training of his children to unconverted persons, or even to those whose hearts are not one with him as to separation from the world. It is natural that a child should look up to, and follow the example of, one who has the training and management of him. Now, what can a teacher make of a child, save what he is himself? Whither can he lead him but to where he is himself? What principles can he instill save those which govern his own mind, and form the basis of his own character? Well, if I see a

man governed by worldly principles—if I see plainly, from his whole course and character, that he is an unconverted person, shall I commit to him the training or instruction of my children, or the formation of their characters? It would be the height of folly and inconsistency so to do. As well might a man who desired to make an oval-shaped bullet cast the melted lead into a circular mould.

The same principle applies to the reading of books. A book is decidedly a silent teacher and former of the mind and character; and if I am called to look well to the character and principles of the living teacher, I am equally so to look to those of a *silent* teacher. I am quite convinced that, in reference both to books and teachers, we need to have our consciences stirred and instructed.]

In the book of Numbers "the little ones" are again introduced to our notice. We have just seen that the real purpose of a soul in communion with God was to go up with the little ones out of Egypt. They must be brought forth from thence at all cost; but neither faith nor faithfulness will rest here. We must not only count upon God to bring them up out of Egypt, but also to bring them on into Canaan. Here Israel signally failed. After the return of the spies, the congregation, on hearing their discouraging report, gave utterance to these fatal accents, "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" (Num. 14) This was terrible. It was, in reality, so far as in them lay, verifying Pharaoh's wily prediction in reference to these very little ones, "Look to it now, for evil is before you." Unbelief always justifies Satan, and makes God a liar, while faith always justifies God, and proves Satan a liar; and as it is invariably true, that according to your faith so shall it be unto you; so we find, on the other hand, that unbelief reaps as it sows. Thus it was with unhappy, because unbelieving, Israel. "As truly as I live, saith the LORD, *as ye have spoken in Mine ears, so will I do to you.* Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against Me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. *But your little ones,* which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in the wilderness." (ver. 28-32) "They limited the Holy One of Israel," as to their little ones. This was a grievous sin, and it has been recorded for our admonition. How constantly does the heart of the Christian parent reason, in reference to the mode of dealing with children, instead of simply taking God's ground about them. It may be said, We cannot make Christians of our children. This is not the

question. We are not called to "make" anything of them. This is God's work, and His only; but if He says, "Bring your little ones with you," shall we refuse? I would not make a formalist of my child, and I *could* not make him a real Christian; but if God, in infinite grace, says to me, "I look upon your house as part of yourself, and, in blessing you, I bless it," shall I, in gross unbelief of heart, refuse this blessing, lest I should minister to formalism, or because I cannot impart reality? God forbid. Yea, rather, let me rejoice with deep unfeigned joy, that God has blessed me with a blessing so divinely rich and full that it extends not only to me, but also to all who belong to me; and, seeing that grace has given me the blessing, let faith take it up and appropriate it.*

[*Note: Very many content themselves with the assurance that, at some time or other, their children will be converted. But this is not taking God's ground with them now. If we have the assurance that they are within the range of God's purpose, why do we not act upon that assurance? If we are waiting to see certain evidences of conversion in them, before we act as Scripture directs, it is plain that we are looking at something besides God's promise. This is not faith. The Christian parent is privileged to look upon his child *now*, as one to be trained for the Lord. He is bound to take this ground, in faith, and train him thus, looking to God, in the fullest assurance, for the result. If I wait to see fruits, this is not faith. Besides the question arises, what are my children now? They may be going about like idle, wilful vagrants, bringing sad dishonour on the name and truth of Christ, and yet, all the while, I satisfy myself by saying, I know they will be converted yet. This will never do. My children should be now a testimony for God; and they can only be this by my taking God's ground with them, and going on with Him about them.]

But, let us remember, that the way to prove our entrance into the blessing is by fulfilling the responsibility. To say that I am counting upon God to bring my children to Canaan, and yet all the while, educating them for Egypt, is a deadly delusion. My conduct proves my profession to be a lie, and I am not to wonder if, in the righteous dealings of God, I am allowed to be filled with the fruit of my own doings. Conduct will ever prove the reality of our convictions; and, in this, as in everything else, that word of the Lord is most solemnly true, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." We often want to know the doctrine before we do the will, and the consequence is, we are left in the most profound ignorance. Now, to do the will of God in reference to our children, is to treat them as He does, by regarding them as part of ourselves, and training them accordingly. It is not merely by hoping they may ultimately prove to be the children of God, but by regarding them as those who are already brought into a place of privilege, and dealing with them upon this ground in reference

to every thing. According to the thoughts and actings of many parents, it would seem as though they regarded their children in the light of heathens, who had no present interest in Christ, or relationship to God at all. This is, assuredly, falling grievously short of the divine mark. Nor is this a question, as it is too often made, of infant or adult baptism. No; it is simply and entirely a question of faith in the power and extent of that peculiarly gracious word, "Thou and thy house"—a word, the force and beauty of which we shall see more and more fully as we proceed.

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, the children of Israel are again and again instructed to set the commandments, the statutes, the judgments, and precepts of the law before their little ones; and these same little ones are contemplated as inquiring into the nature and object of various ordinances and institutions. The reader can easily run through the various passages.

I now pass on to that truly memorable resolution of Joshua, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15) Observe, "Me and my house." He felt it was not sufficient that he himself should be personally pure from all contact with the defilements and abominations of idolatry; he had also to look well to the moral character and practical condition of his house. Though Joshua were not to worship idols, yet, if his children did so, would he be guiltless? Certainly not. Moreover, the testimony of the truth would have been as effectually marred by the idolatry of Joshua's house as by the idolatry of Joshua himself; and judgment would have been executed accordingly. It is well to see this distinctly. The opening of the first book of Samuel affords most solemn demonstration of the truth of this—"And the LORD said to Samuel, .Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning *his house*: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; BECAUSE HIS SONS MADE THEMSELVES VILE AND HE RESTRAINED THEM NOT." (1 Sam. 3:11-13)

Here we see that no matter what the personal character of the servant of God may be, yet if he fail in the due regulation of his house, God will not hold him guiltless. Eli should have restrained his sons. It was his privilege, as it is ours, to be able to count upon the specific power of God in the subjugation of every element in his house which was calculated to mar the testimony; but he did not do this, and, hence, his terrible end was that he broke his neck about the house of God, because he had not broken his heart about his own house. Had he waited upon God about his willful sons—had he acted faithfully—had

he discharged the holy responsibilities devolving upon him, the house of God would never have been desecrated, and the ark of God would not have been taken. In a word, had he treated his house as part of himself, and made it what it ought to be, he would not have called down upon himself the heavy judgment of him whose principle it is never to separate the words, "*Thou and thy house.*"

But how many parents have since trodden in Eli's footsteps! Through an utterly false idea in reference to the entire basis and character of parental relationship, they have allowed their children, from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to manhood, in the unrestrained indulgence of the will. Not having faith to take divine ground, they have failed in moral power to take even the human ground of making their children respect and obey them, and the issue has presented to view the most fearful picture of lawless extravagance and wild confusion. The highest object for the servant of God to set before him in the management of his house is the testimony therein afforded to the honor of Him to whose house he himself belongs. This is really the proper ground of action. I must not seek to have my children in order because it would be an annoyance and inconvenience to me to have them otherwise, but because the honor of God is concerned in the godly order of the households of all those who form constituent parts of His house.

Here, however it may be objected that, up to this point, we have been breathing only the atmosphere of Old Testament scripture, and that the principles and proofs have been only thence deduced; now, on the contrary, God's principle of action is grace according to election, and this leads to the calling out of a man, irrespective of all domestic ties and relationships, so that you may find a most godly, devoted, heavenly minded saint at the head of a most ungodly, irregular, worldly family. I maintain, in opposition to this, that the principles of God's moral government are eternal, and, therefore, whether developed in one age or another, they must be the same. He cannot, at one time, teach that a man and his house are one, and commend him for ruling it properly, and at another time, teach that they are not one, but permit him to rule his house as he pleases. This is impossible. God's approval or disapproval of things, flows out of what He is in Himself; and, in this matter, in particular, inasmuch as God rules His own house according to what He is Himself, He commands His servants to rule their houses upon the same principle. Has the dispensation of grace or of Christianity come in to upset this lovely moral order? God forbid! Nay, it has rather, if possible, added new traits of beauty thereto. Was the house of a Jew looked at as a part of himself, and shall the house of a Christian be different? Truly not. It would be a sad abuse, and an anomalous application of that heavenly word, "grace", to apply it to the misrule and demoralisation that prevail in the houses of numberless

Christians of the present day. Is it grace to allow the will to ride rampant? Is it grace to have all the passions, tempers, whims, and appetites of a corrupt nature indulged? Alas! call it not grace, lest our souls should lose the real meaning of the word, and begin to imagine it to be what we have called it. Call it by its proper names—a monstrous abuse—a denial of God, not only as the Ruler of His own house, but as the moral Administrator of the universe—a flagrant contradiction of all the precepts of inspiration on this deeply-important subject.

But let us turn to the New Testament and see if we cannot find in its sacred pages ample proof of our thesis. Does the Holy Ghost, in this grand section of His book, exclude a man's house from the privileges and responsibilities attached thereto in the Old Testament? We shall see very plainly that He does no such thing. Let us have the proofs. In Christ's commission to His Apostles, we find these words, "And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house [not merely the master] be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you again." (Matt. 10:11-13) Again, "And Jesus said unto Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to *this house*, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'" (Luke 19:9, 10) So in the case of Cornelius—"Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby *thou and all thy house* shall be saved." (Acts 11:13, 14) So also to the jailer at Philippi: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved and thy house*." (Acts 16:31) Then we have the practical result—"And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God *with all his house*." (ver. 34) In the same chapter, Lydia says, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into *my house* and abide." (ver. 15.) "The Lord give mercy unto *the house* of Onesiphorus." Why? was it because of its actings toward him? No; but "because he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain." (2 Tim. 1:16) "A bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:4)

Now, under the term "house," three things are included, viz., the house itself, the children, and the servants. All these, whether taken together or separately, should bear the distinct stamp of God. The house of a man of God should be ruled for God, in His name and for His glory. The head of a Christian household is the representative of God. Whether as a father, or as a master, he is, to his household an expression of the power of God; and he is bound to walk in the intelligent recognition and practical development of this fact. It is on

this principle he is to provide for and govern the whole. Hence, "if any provide not for his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." By neglecting the sphere over which God has set him, he proves his ignorance of, and unlikeness to the One whom he is called to represent.

This is plain enough. If I want to know how I am to provide for and rule my house, I have only carefully to study the way in which God provides for and rules His house. This is the true way to learn. Nor is it here a question as to the actual conversion of the constituent parts of the household. Not at all. What I desire to press upon all Christian heads of houses is, that the whole affair, from one end to the other, should distinctly wear the stamp of God's presence and God's authority—that there should be a clear acknowledgement of God on the part of every member. That everything should be so conducted as to elicit the confession, "*God is here;*" and all this not that the head of the house may be praised for his moral influence and judicious management, but simply that God may be glorified. This is not too much to aim at; yea, we should never rest satisfied with anything less. A Christian's house should be but a miniature representation of the house of God, not so much in the actual condition of individual members, as in the moral order and godly arrangement of the whole.

Some may shake their heads and say, This is all very fine, but where will you get it? I only ask, Does the word of God teach a Christian man so to rule his house? If so, woe be to me if I refuse or fail to do so. That there has been the most grievous failure in the management of our houses, every honest conscience must admit; but nothing can be more shameful than for a man calmly and deliberately to sit down satisfied with a disordered condition of his house because he cannot attain to the standard which God has set before him. All I have to do is to follow the line which Scripture has laid down, and the blessing must assuredly follow, for God cannot deny Himself. But if I, in unbelief of heart, say I cannot reach the blessing, of course I never shall. Every field of blessing or privilege which God opens before us demands an energy of faith to enter. Like Canaan of old to the children of Israel; there it lay, but they had to go thither, for the word was, "Every place that thy foot shall tread upon." Thus it is ever. Faith takes possession of what God gives. We should aim at everything which tends to glorify Him who has made us all we are or ever shall be.

But what can be more dishonoring to God than to see the house of His servant the very reverse of what He would have it? And yet, were we to judge from what constantly meets our view, it would seem as if many Christians thought that their houses had nothing whatever to do with their testimony. Most humbling is it to meet with some who, so far as they are personally concerned, seem nice Christians, but who

entirely fail in the management of their houses. They speak of separation from the world, but their houses present the most distressingly worldly appearance; they speak of the world being crucified to them, and of their being crucified to the world, and yet the world is stamped on the very face of their whole establishment. Everything seems designed to minister to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Magnificent pier-glasses to reflect the flesh; sumptuous carpets, sofas, and loungers for the ease of the flesh; glittering chandeliers for the pride and vanity of the flesh. But it may be said, it is taking low ground to descend to such particulars. I reply, the daughters of Zion might just as well have passed the same comment upon the following solemn appeal: "In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails." (Isa. 3:18-23.)

This was descending to very minute particulars. The same might be said of the following passage from Amos: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion...that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David." (Amos 6:1-5.) The Spirit of God can descend to particulars when the particulars are there to be descended to. But it may be further objected, "We must furnish our houses according to our rank in life." Wherever this objection is urged, it reveals very fully the real ground of the objector's soul. That ground is the world, unquestionably. "*Our rank in life!*" What does this really mean, as applied to those who profess to be *dead*? To talk of our rank in life, is to deny the very foundations of Christianity. If we have rank in life, then it follows that we must be alive as men in the flesh—men according to nature, and then the law has its full force against us, "For the law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth." Hence this rank in life becomes a most serious matter.

But, let me ask, how did we get rank in life? or, in what life is it? If it be in this life, then we are liars whenever we talk of being "crucified with Christ"—"dead with Christ"—"buried with Christ"—"risen with Christ"—"outside the camp with Christ"—"not in the flesh"—"not of the world that fadeth away." All these are so many splendid lies to those possessing, or pretending to, a rank in this life. This is the real truth of the matter; and we must allow the truth to reach and act upon our consciences, that it may influence our lives. What, then, is the only life in which we have a rank? The resurrection life of Christ.

Redeeming love has given us a rank in this life, and truly we know that worldly furniture, costly array, ridiculous parade and retinue, have nothing to do with rank in this life. Ah, no; the circumstances which comport with rank in heavenly life are, holiness of character, purity of life, spiritual power, profound humility, separation from everything which directly savors of the flesh and the world. To furnish our persons and our houses with these things, would be furnishing them "according to our rank in life." But in point of fact, this objection does really bring out the true principle at the heart's core. It has already been remarked that the house reveals the moral condition of the man; and this objection confirms that statement. People who talk, or even think, of rank in life have, "in their hearts, turned back again into Egypt." And what does God say will be the end of such? "I will carry you away beyond Babylon." Yes, it is greatly to be feared that the great millstone of Revelation 18 presents but too true a picture of the end of much of the sickly, spurious, hollow Christianity of the present day.

It may, however, be further urged that Christianity affords no warrant for filthy and irregular houses. This is most true. I know few things more distressing and dishonoring than to see the house of a Christian characterized by filth and confusion. Such things could never exist in connection with a really spiritual or even a well-adjusted mind. You may set it down that there must be something radically wrong wherever such things exist. Here, in an especial manner, the house of God presents itself before us as a blessed model. Over the door of that house may be seen inscribed this wholesome motto, "Let all things be done decently, and in order;" and all who love God and His house will desire to carry out this precept at home.

The next point suggested by the expression, "Thou and thy house," is the management of our children. This is a sore and deeply-humbling point to many of us, inasmuch as it discloses a fearful amount of failure. The condition of the children tends, more than anything, to bring out the condition of the parent. The real measure of my surrender of the world, and my subjugation of nature, will constantly be shown in my thoughts about and treatment of my children. I profess to have given up the world, so far as I am personally concerned; but then I have children. Have I given up the world for them as well? Some may say, How can I? They are in nature, and must have the world. Here again the true moral condition of the heart is revealed. The world is really not given up, and my children are made an excuse for grasping again what I professed to have given up, but my heart retained all the while. Are my children part of myself, or are they not? Part of myself, assuredly. Well, then, if I profess to have relinquished the world for myself, and yet am seeking it for them, what is it but the wretched anomaly of a man half in Egypt and half in Canaan? We know where

such an one is wholly and in reality. He is wholly and really in Egypt. Yes, my brethren, here is where we have to judge ourselves. Our children tell a tale. The music-master and the dancing-master are surely not the agents which the Spirit of God would select to help our children along, nor do they, by any means, comport with that high-toned Nazariteship to which we are called. These things prove that Christ is not the chosen and amply sufficient portion of our souls. What is sufficient for me, is sufficient for those who are part of me. And shall I be so base as to train my children for the devil and the world? Shall I minister to and pamper that in them which I profess to mortify in myself? It is a grievous mistake, and we shall find it so. If my children are in Egypt, I am there myself. If my children savor of Babylon, I savor of it myself: If my children belong to a corrupt worldly religious system, I belong to it myself, in principle. "Thou and thy house" are one; God has made them one; and "what he has joined together, let no man put asunder."

This is a solemn and searching truth, in the light of which we may clearly see the evil of urging our children along a path upon which we profess to have for ever turned our backs, as believing firmly that it terminates in hell fire. We profess to count the world's literature, its honors, its riches, its distinctions, its pleasures, all "dung and dross," yet these very things, which we have declared to be only hindrances to us in our Christian course, and which, as such, we have professed to cast aside, we are diligently setting before our children as things perfectly essential to their progress. In so doing we entirely forget that things which act as clogs to us, cannot possibly act as helps to our children.* It were infinitely better to throw off the mask, and declare plainly, that we have not given up the world at all; and nothing ever made this thoroughly manifest but our children. The Lord, I believe, in righteous judgment, is taking up the families of brethren, to show in them the actual condition of the testimony amongst us. In many cases, it is well known, that the children of Christians are the wildest and most ungodly in the neighbourhood. Should this be so? Would God accept a testimony at the hand of those who have it so? Would it be thus if we were walking faithfully before God as to our houses? These inquiries must be answered in the negative. If only I get the principle of "Thou and thy house" firmly fixed in my conscience, and intelligently wrought into my mind, I shall see it to be my place to count upon God, and cry to Him, just as much for the testimony of my house as for my own testimony. In reality I cannot separate them. I may attempt it, but it is vain.

[*Note: The Christian parent may ask, What am I to teach my child? The answer is simple. Teach him only such things as will prove useful to him as a servant of Christ. Do not teach him aught which you know would prove a positive source of defilement or weakness to him;

should he remain here. We are seldom at a loss to know what kind of food to give our children. We are tolerably well aware of what would prove nourishing and what would prove the reverse. Now, were the instincts of the new nature as true and as energetic in us, as those of the old, we should, I am persuaded, be at as little loss to decide in reference to what we should teach our children. In this, as in everything else, it may be said, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If we have a deep sense of Christ's glory, and a sincere desire to promote it, we shall not be left in perplexity; but if our body is not "full of light," we may be assured our "eye" is not "single."]

How often has one felt a pang at hearing such words as these, "Such an one is a very dear, godly, devoted brother; but, oh! he has the boldest and wildest children in the neighbourhood, and his house is a sad mess of misrule and confusion." I ask, what is the testimony of such an one worth, in the judgment of God? Little indeed. Saved he may be; but is salvation all we want? Is there no testimony to be given? and if there is, what is it? and where is it to be seen? Is it confined to the benches of a meeting-room, or is it to be seen in the midst of a man's house? The heart can answer.

But it may be urged, Our children will crave a little worldly enjoyment, and we must indulge them. We cannot put old heads upon young shoulders. I reply, Our own hearts often crave a little of the world likewise. Shall we indulge their craving? No; but judge it. Exactly so. Do the same in reference to your children's craving. If I find my children going out after the world, I should immediately judge and chasten myself before God, crying to Him to enable me to put it down, so that the testimony may not suffer. But I cannot but believe that, if the parent's heart is, from its center to its circumference, purged of the world, its principles, and its lusts, it will exert a mighty influence upon his whole house. This is what makes this entire question one of such vast magnitude and practical weight. Is my house a just criterion by which to judge of my real condition? I believe the whole teaching of Scripture is in favour of an affirmative. This makes the matter peculiarly solemn. How am I walking before my family? Is my whole course and character so unequivocal that all can see that my one supreme object is Christ, and that I would just as soon, if I could, unlock the portals of hell, and let my children in, as educate them for the world, or seek the world for them?

This I feel to be a startling inquiry; yet it is one which we are bound to follow up to the uttermost. What has called into existence, in many cases, that awful profanity, that disposition to scoff at sacred things, that utter distaste for the Scriptures, and for meetings where the Scriptures are brought forward, that skeptical and infidel spirit so sadly

apparent in the children of Christian professors? Will any one undertake to say that the parents have nothing to do with this, in the judgment of God? May not much of this be justly traced to the sad incongruity between the professed principles and the actual practices of the parents? I believe it may. Children are shrewd observers. They very soon begin to discover what their parents are really at. They will gather this, too, much more speedily and accurately from their *doings*, than from their *prayings* or their *sayings*; and, although the parents may teach that the world and its ways are bad, and though they may pray that their children may know the Lord, yet inasmuch as they are educating them for the world, and seeking most industriously to push them on in it, grasping at and getting in by every opening, and congratulating themselves when they have succeeded in settling them there, it necessarily follows that the children begin to say in their hearts, "The world is a good place after all, for my parents thank God on getting me a berth in it, and look upon it as a most marked opening of Providence. All that peculiar talk of theirs, therefore, about being dead to the world, and being risen with Christ—the world's being under judgment, and their being strangers and pilgrims therein—all this must be rank nonsense, or else Christians, so called, must be rank deceivers." Will any one say that such reasoning as this has not passed through the mind of many a professor's child? I cannot doubt it. The grace of God, no doubt, is sovereign, and often triumphs over all our errors and failures; but oh! let us think of the testimony, and let us see that our houses are really ordered for God and not for Satan.*

[*Note: I would, however, desire to remind the children of Christian parents that they are solemnly responsible to hearken to God's holy word, quite irrespective of the conduct of their parents. God's truth is not affected by the actings of men; and wherever one has heard the testimony of God's love, in the death and resurrection of Christ, he is responsible for the use he makes thereof, even though he should not have seen its sacred influence and power exemplified in the life of his parents. I would press these facts upon the serious attention of all children of Christian parents.]

But it will be said, How are our children to get on? must they not earn their bread? Unquestionably. God formed us for work. The very fact of my having a pair of hands proves that I am not to be idle. But I need not push my son back into that world which I have left, in order to give him employment. The Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, had one Son, His only begotten, the Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; He did not take up any of the learned professions, but was known as "the carpenter." Has this no voice for us? Christ has gone up on high and taken His seat at God's right hand. As thus risen, He is our Head, Representative, and Model; but He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Are we following

His steps in seeking to push our children on in that very world which crucified Him? Surely not: we are adopting the very opposite course; and the end will be accordingly. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." As we sow, in reference to our children, so shall we also reap. If we sow to the flesh and the world, we cannot expect to reap otherwise. But I would not, by any means, be understood to teach that a Christian parent ought to place his child below the level on which the Lord has placed himself. I do not believe he would be warranted in so doing. If my calling be a godly one, it may suit my child as well as it suits myself. All cannot be carpenters, it is true; yet one feels that, in an age of progress like the present, where "onward and upward in the world" seems to be the great motto, there is a deep moral for the heart in the fact that the Son of God—the Creator and Sustainer of the universe—was only known amongst men, as "the carpenter." It assuredly teaches that Christians should not be found seeking "great things" for their children.

However, it is not merely in reference to the object set forth in our children's education that we have failed, and so marred the testimony; but also in the matter of keeping them in general subjection to parental authority. On this point, there has been great deficiency amongst Christian parents. The spirit of the present age is that of insubordination. "Disobedient to parents" forms a trait in the apostasy of the last days; and we have specially helped on its development by an entirely false application of the principle of grace, as also by not seeing that there is involved in the parental relationship a principle of power exercised in righteousness, without which our houses must prove to be scenes of lawlessness and wild confusion. It is no grace to pamper an unsanctified will. We mourn over our own lack of a broken will, and yet we are strengthening the will in our children. It is always to my mind a manifest proof of the weakness of parental authority, as well as of ignorance of the way in which the servant of God should rule his house, to hear a parent say to a child, "*Will* you do so and so?" This question, simple as it seems, tends directly to create or minister to the very thing which you ought to put down, by every means in your power, and that is, the exercise of the child's *will*. Instead, therefore, of asking the child, "Will you do?" just tell him what he is to do, and let there not be in his mind the idea of calling in question your authority. The parent's will should be supreme with a child, because the parent stands in the place of God. All power belongs to God, and He has invested His servant with power, both as a father and a master. If, therefore, the child or the servant resist this power, it is resistance of God.*

[*Note: "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4.) There

is great danger of provoking our children to wrath by inordinate strictness and arbitrary treatment. We may constantly find ourselves seeking to mould and fashion our children according to our own tastes and peculiarities, rather than to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is a very great mistake, and will surely issue in failure and confusion. We shall gain nothing, in the way of testimony for Christ, by moulding and fashioning nature into the most exquisite shapes. Moreover, it does not require faith to train and cultivate nature; but it does require it to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Some, however, may say that the apostle in the above passage, is speaking of converted children. To this I reply, that there is nothing about conversion in the passage. It is not said, "Bring up your converted children," etc. Were it thus, it would settle the whole question. But it is simply said, "*your children*," which surely must mean all our children. Now, if I am to bring up all my children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, when am I to commence? Am I to wait till they grow up to be almost men and women? or am I to begin where all right-minded people begin the work, namely, at the *beginning*? Am I to allow them to run on in nature's folly and wildness, during the most important part of their career, without ever seeking to bring their consciences into the presence of God, as to their solemn responsibilities? Am I to suffer them to spend, in utter thoughtlessness, that period of life in which the elements of their future character are imparted? This would be the most refined cruelty. What should we say to a gardener who would allow the branches of his fruit-trees to assume all sorts of crooked and fantastic shapes ere he thought of commencing a proper system of training? We should, doubtless pronounce him a fool and a madman. And yet such an one is wise in comparison with a parent who suspends the nurture and admonition of the Lord, until his children have made manifest progress in the nurture and admonition of the enemy.

But, it may be said, We must wait for evidences of conversion. To this I reply, that faith never waits for evidences, but acts on God's Word, and the evidences are sure to follow. It is always a manifest proof of infidelity to wait for signs when God gives a command. If Israel had waited for a sign when God said, "Go forward," it would have been plain disobedience; and if the man with the withered hand had waited for some evidence of strength when Christ commanded him to stretch forth his hand, he might have carried his withered hand to the grave with him. So is it with parents. If they wait for signs and evidences before they obey God's word in Ephesians 6:4, they are certainly not walking by faith, but by sight. Besides, if we are to begin at the beginning to train our children, we must evidently begin before they are capable of giving what we might regard as evidences of

conversion.

In this, as in every thing else, our place is to obey, and leave results with God. The moral condition of the soul may be tested by the command; but where there is the disposition to obey, the power to do so will surely accompany the command, and the fruits of obedience will follow, "*in due season, if we faint not.*"]

"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." Observe, it is "God and his doctrine." Why? Because it is a question of power. The name of Christ and His doctrine would put the master and servant on a level, as members of one body. In Christ Jesus there is no distinction; but when I go abroad in the world, I encounter God's moral government, which makes one a master and another a servant; and any infringement upon that government will meet with certain judgment.

Now it is of immense importance to have a clear understanding of the doctrine of God's moral government. It would settle many a difficulty, and solve many a question. This government is carried on with a righteous decision, which is peculiarly solemnizing. If we look through Scripture in reference to this subject, we shall find that in every instance in which there has been error or failure, it has inevitably produced its own results. Adam took of the forbidden fruit, and he was instantly thrust forth from the garden, into a world groaning beneath the curse and weight of his sin. Nor was he ever replaced in Paradise. True, grace came in, and gave him a promise of a Deliverer; moreover, it clothed his naked shoulders. Nevertheless, his sin produced its own result. He made a false step, and he never recovered it. Again, Moses, at the waters of Meribah, uttered a hasty word, and immediately a righteous God forbid his entrance into Canaan. In his case, likewise, grace came in, and gave him something better; for it was much better from the top of Pisgah, to inspect the plains of Palestine in company with Jehovah, than to inhabit them in company with Israel. So also in David's case. He committed a sin, and the solemn denunciation was immediately issued, "The sword shall never depart from thy house." In his case, too, grace abounded, and he enjoyed a more profound sense of grace as he ascended the side of Mount Olivet with bare feet and covered head than he ever had enjoyed amid the splendours of a throne; nevertheless, his sin produced its own result. He made a false step, and he never recovered it.

Nor is the exemplification of this principle confined merely to Old Testament times. By no means. Look at the case of Barnabas. He gave utterance to the seemingly amiable desire to have the company of his nephew Mark, and, from that moment, he loses his honorable place in

the records of the Holy Ghost. He is never heard of afterwards, and his place was supplied with a more wholly devoted heart.* Hence, God's moral government is a most momentous truth. It is such that, as surely as one does wrong, he will reap the fruit of it, no matter who he is—believer or unbeliever, saint or sinner. Grace may forgive the sin, and will, where it is confessed and judged; but inasmuch as the principles of God's moral government have been interfered with, the offender must be made to feel his mistake. He has missed a step of the wheel, and he shall assuredly feel the consequences. This is a most solemn but specially wholesome truth, the action of which has been sadly clogged by false notions about grace. God never allows His grace to interfere with His moral government. He could not do so, because it would produce confusion, and "God is not the author of confusion."*

[*Note: It was nature in Barnabas that led him to wish for the company of one who "departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work." It was amiable nature, yet it was nature, and it triumphed, for he took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, his native country, where, in the freshness of his Christian course, he had sold his property, in order to be a more unshackled follower of Him who had not where to lay His head. (See Acts 4:36-37.) This is no uncommon case. Many set out with a surrender of heart and nature with their respective claims. The blossom on the tree of Christian profession looks fair, and emits a fragrant perfume; but alas! it is not followed by the rich and mellow fruit of autumn. The influences of earth and nature gather around the soul, and nip its beautiful blossoms, and all ends in barrenness and disappointment. This is very sad, and is always attended with the very worst moral effect upon the testimony. It is not at all a question of ceasing to be a saved person. Barnabas was a saved person. The influences of Mark and Cyprus could not blot out his name from the Lamb's book of life, but they did most thoroughly blot out His name from the records of testimony and service here below. And was not this something to be lamented? Is there nought to be deplored or dreaded, save the loss of personal salvation? Most despicable is the selfishness that can think so. For what purpose does the blessed God take so much pains and trouble in maintaining His people here? Is it that they may be saved and made meet for glory? No such thing. Saved they are already, by the accomplished redemption of Christ and, therefore, meet for glory. There is no middle step between justification and glory, for "whom he justified them he also glorified." Why, therefore, does God leave us here? That we may be a testimony for Christ. Were it not for this, we might just as well be taken to heaven the moment of our conversion. May we have grace to understand this point, in all its fullness and practical power.]

It is here there has been so much failure in the management of our houses. We have forgotten the principle of righteous rule which God

has set before us, and in the exercise of which He has given us an example. My reader must not confound the principle of God's government with the aspect of His character.* The two things are distinct. The former is righteousness, the latter is grace; but what I here desire to bring out is the fact that there is a principle of righteousness involved in the relationship of father and master, and if this principle receive not its due place in the management of the family, there must be confusion. If I see a *strange* child doing wrong, I have no divine authority to exercise righteous discipline towards him; but the moment I see my own child doing so, I put him under discipline. Why? because I am his father. But it may be said, The parental relationship is one of love. True; it is founded in love: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." But although the relationship is founded in love, it is exercised in righteousness, for "the time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God." So also in Hebrews 12, we are taught that the very fact of our being genuine sons, brings us under the righteous discipline of the Father's hand. In John 17, too, the church is committed to the care of the Holy Father to be kept by Him through His own name.

[*Note: The epistles of Peter develop the doctrine of God's moral government. He it is who asks the question, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Now, some may find a difficulty in reconciling this inquiry with Paul's statement, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It were needless to say that the two ideas are in perfect and beautiful harmony. The Lord Jesus Himself, who was the only perfect and unwavering follower of that which is good, who, from first to last, "went about doing good," found, in the end, the cross, the spear, the borrowed grave. The apostle Paul, who, beyond all other men kept close to the Great Original which was set before him, was called to drink an unusually large cup of privation and persecution. And to this moment, the more like Christ, and the more devoted to Him any one is, the more privation and persecution he will suffer. Were any one, in true devotedness to Christ and love to souls, to take his stand publicly in some Roman Catholic district, and there preach Christ, his life would be in imminent danger. Do all these facts interfere with Peter's inquiry? By no means. The direct tendency of God's moral government is to protect from injury all who are "followers of that which is good," and to bring down punishment upon all who are the reverse; but it never interferes with the higher path of ardent discipleship, or deprives any one of the privilege and dignity of being as like Christ as he will; "for unto you it is given, on behalf of Christ (*to uper Cristou*), not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him (*uper autou*) having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear in me." (Phil. 1:29, 30.) Here we are taught that it is an actual gift conferred upon us

to be allowed to suffer for Christ, and this in the midst of a scene in which, on the ground of God's moral government, it can be said, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" To recognize and be a subject of God's government is one thing, and to be a follower of a rejected and crucified Christ is quite another. Even in Peter's epistle, which, as we have remarked, has as its special theme, the doctrine of God's government, we read, "But, if doing well and suffering for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God. For unto this were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps." And again, "If any suffer as *a Christian* [from being morally like Christ], let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this matter."

Now, in every case in which this great truth has been lost sight of by Christian parents, their houses have been thrown into confusion. They have not governed their children, and as a consequence, their children have, in process of time, governed them, for there will be government somewhere; and if those into whose hands God has put the reins do not hold them properly, they will speedily fall into bad hands; and can there be a more melancholy sight than to see parents governed by their children? I believe, in God's sight, it presents a fearful moral blot, which must bring down His judgment. A parent who lets the reins of government drop from his hands, or who does not hold them steadily, has grievously failed in his high and holy position as the representative of God, and the depository of His power; nor do I believe that any one so failing can ever thoroughly regain his place, or be a proper witness for God in his day and generation. A subject of grace he may be; but then, a subject of grace, and a witness for God are two widely different things. This will account for the sorrowful condition of many brethren. They have utterly failed to govern their houses, and hence they have lost their true position and moral influence—their energies are paralysed, their mouths closed, their testimony hushed; and if any such do lift the voice in some feeble way, the finger of scorn is instantly pointed at their families, and this cannot but send a blush to the cheek and a pang to the conscience.

Nor do people always take a correct view of this matter, and trace the failure up to its legitimate source. Many are too ready to look upon it as a natural and necessary thing that their children are to grow up wilful and worldly. They say, It is all very well while your children are young, but wait till they grow older, and you will see that you must let them go into the world. Now, I want to know, is it the mind of God that the children of His servants must necessarily grow up wilful and worldly? I never could believe any such thing. Well, then, if it be not His mind that they should so grow up—if He has graciously opened the same path to my house as He has opened to myself—if He has permitted me to select the same portion for my children as I have,

through His grace, selected for myself—if, after all this, my children grow up wilful and worldly, what am I to infer? Why, that I have grievously sinned and failed in my parental relationship and responsibilities—that I have wronged my children and dishonoured the Lord. Shall I go and make a general principle of this, and set it down that all the children of Christians must grow up as mine have? Shall I go and discourage young parents from taking God's ground in reference to their dear children, by setting before them my abominable failure, instead of encouraging them by setting before them God's infallible faithfulness to all who seek Him in the way of His appointment? To act thus would be to follow in the steps of the old prophet of Bethel, who, because he was in the midst of evil himself, sought to drag his brother in also, and had him slain by a lion for disobeying the word of the Lord.

But the sum of the matter is this, the wilfulness of my children reveals the wilfulness of my own heart, and a righteous God is using them to chasten me, because I have not chastened myself. This is a peculiarly solemn view of the case, and one that calls for deep searching of heart. To save myself trouble, I have let things take their course in my family, and now my children have grown up around me to be thorns in my side, because I trained them not for God. This is the history of thousands. We should ever bear in mind that our children, as well as ourselves, should be "set for the defence and confirmation of the gospel." I feel persuaded that, could we only be led to regard our houses as a testimony for God, it would produce an immense reformation in our mode of ruling them. We should then seek a high tone of moral order, not that we might be spared any trouble or vexation, but rather that the testimony might not suffer through any confusion in our families. But let us not forget that, in order to subdue nature in our children, we must subdue it in ourselves. We can never subdue nature by nature. It is only as we have crushed it in ourselves, that we are in a position to crush it in our children. Moreover, there must be the clearest understanding and the fullest harmony between the father and mother. Their voice, their will, their authority, their influence, should be essentially one—one in the strictest sense of that word. Being themselves "no more twain, but one flesh," they should ever appear before their children in the beauty and power of that oneness. In order to this, they must wait much upon God together—they must be much in His presence, opening up all their hearts, and telling out all their need. Christians do frequently injure one another in this respect. It sometimes happens that one partner really desires to give up the world and subdue nature to an extent for which the other is not prepared, and this produces sad results. It sometimes leads to reserve, to shuffling, to management and generalship, to positive antagonism in the views and principles of husband and wife, so that

they cannot really be said to be joined in the Lord. The effect of all this upon the children as they grow up is pernicious beyond all conception; and the influence which it exerts in deranging the entire house is quite incalculable. What the father commands the mother remits; what the father builds up the mother pulls down. Sometimes the father is represented as stern, severe, arbitrary, and exacting. The maternal influence acts outside, and independent of, the paternal; sometimes even it sets it aside altogether; so that the father's position becomes wretched in the extreme, and the whole family presents a most demoralised and ungodly appearance.* This is terrible. Children never could be properly trained under such circumstance; and as to testimony for Christ, the bare thought of it is monstrous. Wherever such a state of things prevails, there should be the deepest sorrow of heart before the Lord on account of it. His mercy is exhaustless, and His tender compassions fail not; and surely we may hope that, where there is true contrition and confession, God will graciously come in with healing and restoration. One thing is certain, that we should not go on content to have things so; therefore, let the one who feels the sorrow of heart cry mightily to God, day and night—cry to Him on the ground of His own truth and name, which are blasphemed by such things; and, be assured, He will hear and answer.

[*Note: Nothing can be more melancholy than to hear a mother say to a child, "We must not let your father know anything about this." Where such a course of reserve and double dealing is adopted there must be something radically and awfully wrong, and it is a moral impossibility that any thing like godly order can prevail, or right discipline be carried out. Either the father must, by inordinate severity or unwarrantable strictness, be "provoking his children to wrath," or the mother must be pampering the child's will at the expense of the father's character and authority. In either case there is an effectual barrier to the testimony, and the children suffer grievous injury. Hence, Christian parents should see well to it that they always appear before their children, and also before their servants, in the power of that unity which flows from their being perfectly joined together in the Lord. If, unhappily, any shade of difference should arise in reference to the details of domestic government, let it be made a matter of private conference, prayer, and self-judgment in the presence of God; but never let the subjects of government see such a manifest proof of moral weakness, for it will surely cause them to despise the government.]

But let all be viewed in the light of testimony for God's Son. It is to further this we are left here. We are surely not left here merely to bring up families. We are left here to bring them up for God, with God, by God, and before God. To do all this, we must be much in His presence. A Christian parent should take great care not to punish his children

merely to gratify his whims and tempers. He is to represent God in the midst of his family. This, when properly understood, will regulate every thing. He is God's steward, likewise, and in order rightly and intelligently to discharge the functions of his stewardship, he must have frequent—yea, unbroken—intercourse with his Master. He must be constantly betaking himself to His feet, to know what he is to do, and how he is to do it. This will make everything easy and happy. It is often the desire of one's heart to get an abstract rule for this, that, and the other thing, in the details of family arrangement. One may ask what sort of punishments, what sort of rewards, what sort of amusements, should a Christian parent adopt. Actual punishment will, I believe, rarely be called for, if the divine principle of government be carried out from the earliest date; and as to rewards, it would be better to put them in the light of expressions of love and approval. A child must be obedient—unqualifiedly and unhesitatingly obedient—not to get a reward, which is apt to feed emulation, a fruit of the flesh; but because God would have him so; and then, of course, it is quite allowable for the parent to express his approval in the shape of some little present. As to amusement, let it always, if possible, assume the character of some useful occupation. This is most salutary. It is a bad thing to cherish the thought in the mind of a child, that painted toys and gilded baubles minister pleasure. With very young children, I have constantly found that they derived more real, and certainly much more simple pleasure from a piece of stick or paper made out by themselves, than from the most expensive toy. Finally, let us, in all things, whether punishment, reward, or amusement, keep the eye on Christ, and earnestly seek the subjugation of the flesh in every shape and form. So shall our houses be a testimony for God, and all who enter them be constrained to say, "GOD IS HERE."

As to the management of servants in a Christian household, the principle is equally simple. The master, as the head of the house, is the expression of the power of God, and as such, he must insist upon subjection and obedience. It is not a question of the Christianity of the servants, but simply of the order which should ever be maintained in a Christian household. Here, too, we must be on our guard against the mere indulgence of our own arbitrary temper. We have to remember that we have a Master in heaven, who has taught us to "give unto our servants that which is just and equal." If only we set the Lord before us, from day to day, and seek to exhibit Him in all our dealings with our servants, we shall be kept from error on every side.

I must now close. I have not written, the Lord knows, to wound any one. I feel the truth, importance, and deep solemnity of the points here put forward, and also my own lack of ability to bring them out with sufficient distinctness and power. However, I look to God to make

them influenza; and where He works, the very weakest agency will answer His end. To Him I now commend these pages, which have, I trust, been begun, continued, and ended in His holy presence. The thought has comforted me not a little, that at the very moment in which it was laid on my conscience to prepare this paper, a number of beloved brethren were actually assembled for humiliation, confession, and prayer, in immediate connection with the testimony of God's Son in these last days. I doubt not that a very leading point of confession has been failure in the government of the house; and if these pages should be used of God's Spirit to produce, even in one conscience, a deeper sense of this failure, and in one heart, a more earnest desire to meet the failure, in God's own way, I shall rejoice, and feel I have not written in vain.

May God Almighty, in His great grace, produce, by His Holy Spirit, in the hearts of all His beloved saints, a more ardent purpose of soul to raise, in this closing hour, a fuller, brighter, more vigorous and decided testimony for Christ, that so, ere the shout of the archangel and the trump of God are heard in the air, there may be a people prepared to meet and welcome the heavenly Bridegroom.

C. H. M.

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