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[The following was written by an aged clergyman, who removed, about five and thirty years ago, from Virginia to Kentucky. It is a specimen of the sentiments and views of our fathers. The editor may be misled in his estimation of the merits of the piece by reverence for a much loved, and highly venerated relative; but he really thinks that it embodies much valuable advice appropriate to the present time, and worthy of most serious attention. Some of the opinions may indeed appear antiquated; yet perhaps it would be difficult to find in any communication of the same length, less that can be reasonably objected to, or more that it would be wise to treasure up in the memory and reduce to practice. The writer had the benefit of nearly a hundred years' experience, and was known to be a diligent and intelligent observer of men and things.]

**THE REV. DAVID RICE'S LAST ADVICE TO HIS CHILDREN,
WHETHER HIS BY AFFINITY OR CONSANGUINITY: WRIT-
TEN IN THE SEVENTY FOURTH YEAR OF HIS AGE.**

My Dear Children,

FOR several years past I have had transient thoughts of leaving behind me, when I departed this life, my dying advice to you. But neglecting to day what might be done to-morrow, I never sat about it, until since the death of your mother. This event of providence turned my attention more fully to the subject and made me more sensible of the duty.

My original intention was to have written this paper and kept it by me, until my death, and so to have ordered it, that you might have received it after my departure. But when I consider that I may possibly live some years yet, that you are advancing in life, that these and other circumstances render the advice proper at present, I determine to communicate it now. You are to consider it as my living advice to you while I live, and my dying advice, when I am dead.

What I call the days of my life are past; what remains is only the twilight. In the cool evening of age, after having

I ved seventy three years, and in the solemn posture of a dying father, in which I endeavour to realize myself, I address you.

Tho' I cannot bespeak your mother's concurrence with me now she is my help-mate no longer, I know she would most heartily have granted it. For your salvation and eternal happiness she was earnestly engaged in pleading with God, and that often when you thought or cared but little about it. Your best interest lay near her heart. I have reason to believe that she spent many hours in this way, when you and the rest of the family were asleep. Thus she ended the fatigues and labours of the day, which she underwent for your temporal support.

Though I only can speak to you now, you are to suppose that you hear us both; hear us, as dying parents speaking to dying children.

My dear children, frequently recollect and seriously realize that we must all appear at the dread tribunal of Jesus Christ; and that then you must give an account to him of the use, the improvement you have made of all the religious advantages and privileges you have enjoyed; and particularly those you have enjoyed in the family in which you have been educated. We had no reason to boast of our skill, diligence, or faithfulness. I am sure I have not. A consciousness of my deficiencies is one excitement to the present attempt. Yet remember your advantages were much greater than children generally enjoy, even in a christian land; and that a proportionable improvement in knowledge and piety is reasonably required.

To assist you in this improvement, and excite you to the duty is the principal object of this address, which I seriously make you, as from the verge of eternity. Hear that your souls may live.

In order to keep my ideas distinct, it is convenient to speak in order, on the doctrines of christianity—on christian morals, or practice—on your conduct as members of civil society.

I. On the doctrines of christianity.

Steadiness in our conduct is necessary in all we do, in order to acting with dignity and success. This dignity of conduct, and success in our religious endeavours is not likely to be obtained, unless we are well established in our principles and rules of our conduct. Therefore,

1. Endeavour without delay, if you have not already done it, to be fixed and well established in your religious sentiments respecting the fundamental doctrines of religion, the government of the christian church, and the scriptural modes of

worship; and carefully guard against a fickle wavering disposition or practice. Indulge not a fondness for religious novelties: generally speaking they are nothing better than seducing errors. Having carefully informed your judgments, strictly act according to them. At the same time extend your charity to others as far as reason and scripture will warrant you, treating christians of every denomination as brethren.

If I knew of any system of religion better than the one in which you have been educated, with all my heart I would advise you to embrace it: but I do not. If you would make progress in religion, which with all earnestness and diligence you ought to endeavour, do it by more fully understanding the old system, and more carefully reducing it to practice; and not by hunting after new ways to heaven.

This attention to steadiness in principle and practice, is very necessary in the present day; because this is a generation of great theoretical vanity and itch for novelties; by which the interests of religion and morality are greatly injured.

2. Chiefly study those doctrines which have a practical tendency or influence; which are calculated to produce holiness of heart or life. Matters of mere speculation, which do not immediately or remotely tend to holy practice, are not only useless; but often very hurtful. If they engage much of our attention, they foster the natural pride of our hearts, and produce uncharitableness towards our fellow men, whom we think inferior to us in knowledge of these things, or who differ from us in sentiment.

The doctrines I mean are those of the existence and perfections of God—His providential government of the natural and moral world—The infinite obligations we are under to him as our maker and benefactor—The great demerit of sin—The superlative love and condescension of God in providing a *Divine Redeemer*—Of the influence of the holy Spirit in a work of regeneration, sanctification, direction and consolation, rendered necessary by the depravity, blindness, weakness, and many sorrows of human nature—Justification by free grace thro' the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—The resurrection of those bodies which are, or ought to be temples of the Holy Ghost—The judgment of the world by Jesus Christ, who will give to every man according to his works—A future state of rewards and punishments, where the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. I say, let these and such other important doctrines as are connected with them, be your chief study; bind them to your hearts, feel their force, and habitually act under their influence.

3. Guard against all those doctrines which minister to human pride, either by lessening, in your estimation, human depravity and the evil and demerits of sin, or by undervaluing the character, offices and merits of Christ, and the grace of the gospel: such as that human depravity is a misfortune the posterity of Adam lie under in consequence of his original apostacy, and so our moral inability to do good, thence derived, is not blame worthy or deserving of punishment—That the atoning blood of Christ was not shed to satisfy the demands of law and justice against sinners—That we are justified in the sight of God by a righteousness wrought in us by our believing the truth.

Treat all your fellow creatures with kindness and with the respect due to their several characters; but have no religious communion with those nominal christians, whose principles sap the foundation of the christian religion, lest you thereby countenance their errors, and partake of their guilt and punishment.

With regard to those points in religion in which humble pious christians differ from you in principle or practice, make yourselves so far acquainted with them as to be able to give a reason sufficient to justify your choice. However dwell not on these points: delight not, nor pride yourselves, in disputing with your dissenting brethren: it sours the temper and dries up the fountain of benevolence in the heart. Men may differ widely as to the mode of worship, and yet be acceptable worshippers of God through Christ.

Though these points are not the essential doctrines or duties of religion, and the principal thing God requires is the heart, nevertheless endeavour in lesser matters to be fully satisfied in your own minds, and conscientiously act according to your own judgments. Never treat any thing revealed in the word of God, as an indifferent or trifling matter. So doing might lead to a habit of trifling with things sacred, and will be offensive to your brethren, and injurious to the cause of truth.

Though I warn you against religious controversy; yet if you have a talent for it, proper information, and providence call you to the work, be ready to defend the sacred scriptures, and the great doctrines they contain; but do it not thro' pride, nor for the honour of a victory; but with humility, meekness and love. At any rate never engage an enemy, until you are acquainted with the ground you occupy, your own force, and the forces of your antagonist.

Let alone the sceptics of the present day, improperly called deists. They have no digested system: what they chiefly

excel in is the art of puzzling. Argument is not what they want, it will have no force upon their minds; and will probably be answered by a quibble, a jest or a sneer: only pity them, pray for them, and set them a good example.

I would not advise you to read much of the sceptical writings of the present and last age: but if any of them should fall into your hands, never imagine that any thing they say is true, because it appears plausible or is new to you: by it never let your minds be warped aside from the truth, or brought into a doubtful state, until you procure the proper antidote to the poison, which upon enquiry you will find some able hand has provided. E. G. Never let Paine stagger your faith until you have read Watson.

II. On christian morals, or practice.

I am not about to lay before you a code of moral precepts. These you have in the sacred scriptures. But as they are not drawn up in order, and particularly named and numbered, you will do well to make use of these helps with which the church is plentifully furnished. I only mean to give you a few cautions, and some serious advice.

1. Do not acquiesce in, or be contented with, those low attainments in religion, which are common among professors; such as you have seen in me and others. The standard of christian morals is sunk very low in the minds of christians, or they have very inadequate notions of the strictness thereof. Consider the great strictness in these as laid down in the sacred scriptures; that the commandments of God are exceeding broad; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and go on from one degree of strength to another, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Three things you know are necessary in order to our actions being spiritually good. The principle must be love to God and man: the motives, God's glory and man's good: the rule, God's laws contained in the sacred scriptures.

The great predominant principle of action must be, a sacred regard to God—A holy reverence of his divine majesty—A high esteem of his supreme excellency—Gratitude for his many mercies, special and common—Faith in Christ as an atoning high priest, a powerful intercessor, and as the head of influences. Without this sacred regard to God, none of our actions can properly be denominated religious actions: but this principle, when it is predominant, converts all the common actions of life into religion, or, which is the same thing, into acts of obedience to God.

Love to man for Christ's sake, is a necessary and noble principle of action. It will always produce justice, and lead

to acts of charity. It will happily guard against all those mean dishonest artifices, by which men are continually abusing each other. Persons acting under its influence, will not only be impelled by conscience to succour and relieve their fellow creatures in distress; but, in so doing, will find much happiness of the purest kind.

Carefully observe the operations of your own minds, and attentively consider your inward principles of action. Without this, you will be in much danger of substituting a regard to reputation, in the room of love to God and man. Then you will make a fatal mistake: you will live to yourselves under the notion of living to your maker and fellow creatures; you will worship self, the meanest idol, instead of the God of heaven.

2. What I chiefly aim at is to mention several things, with regard to which professors of christianity too generally fail altogether, or come very far short of their duty; and warn you against these deficiencies. To these things I would call your particular and serious attention.

(1.) Never separate faith and good works, which God has joined together. This is a practical error very prevalent in the christian world. Many who professedly embrace the doctrine of salvation by grace thro' faith, talk much of free grace and religious experiences; but are not careful to maintain good works. On the other hand, many depend chiefly on their moral lives, tho' they have little to boast of, and think faith a matter of small importance. This amounts to the same thing as separating between action and the principle of action: between seeing and the eyes, hearing and the ears, walking and the feet.

The inward genuine exercises of grace and a holy practice ought and always will go together. True christian experiences always will produce a life of obedience. The grace of God which bringeth salvation will teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, &c.

(2.) Take care you do not make the practices of men, no not the practices of good men, the rule of your conduct. So many imperfections attend the best of men in this very imperfect state, that if you follow them, you will be continually in danger of being led astray, in some instances of your conduct. Perhaps it is common for those, who profess to have made the greatest advances in religion, to live in the habitual neglect of some important duties, or to be evidently deficient in some important branches of the christian temper. Never comfort yourselves with the sinful failings or infirmities of persons esteemed eminently pious, and imagine yourselves

pretty good christians tho' guilty of the same failings, or others as bad; or even tho' you fall short of them in some things. Use such helps as you are favoured with, follow others as far as they follow Christ. Let their progress in religion stir up in you a holy emulation: but remember that they are imperfect creatures, and go to the fountain of truth; learn the christian character and rules of conduct, from the word of God; and endeavour to live up to their directions, forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward to those that lie before you. How often do men prove themselves unwise by comparing themselves among themselves!

(3.) If you love your own souls; if you regard the interest, credit and happiness of your families; if you regard the health of your bodies, or the exercise of your reason; if you set any store by peace of conscience, or the hopes of heaven, avoid the common, criminal, detestable practice of drinking ardent spirits. Drinking, not for the health, for to that it seldom conduces; but thro' pride, to conform to custom, or to gratify your appetites.

By criminal indulgence in this vice, indulgence of an artificial appetite foolishly created, thousands of christians have crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and millions of men have been guilty of suicide. Not many mad men in Bedlam produce more notorious proofs of insanity, than are furnished by the votaries of this abominable practice—insanity which is voluntary; and therefore exceedingly criminal.

(4.) Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy: not only refrain from common manual labour, but also from vain worldly conversation on that day.

Your temptations to the sin of Sabbath breaking will be numerous, frequent and strong. A disregard to the Sabbath is not only common with abandoned profligates, but also with persons of decent characters, and many who make great pretensions to religion, and are esteemed pious persons. The example of all these, and especially the last mentioned, will produce a strong temptation, to stem which, will require great vigilance and vigorous exertion. This influence of example, I have often felt and found cause to lament. If you conscientiously resist this torrent, you will be reproached as hypocrites, and stigmatized as Sabbath day christians, which will add great force to your temptations.

But temptations, perhaps stronger than these, may come from another quarter. Men with whom you have had some dealings, who may have business with you, and whom you are unwilling to disoblige, may take you aside from the view and hearing of others, and introduce this business: it may be

agreeable to your own interest and inclination to converse upon it. In this case you are strongly tempted to make the authority of God in his law give place to complaisance, inclination and interest; and try to reconcile your consciences to dispensing with the divine law. Or when you meet at the house of God for religious worship, you may see some person from a distance, with whom you have business of considerable importance, by speaking a few words with whom, you may save yourselves or him a good deal of trouble, or expence, or perhaps both. You may feel a strong inclination to do this; and persuade yourselves that it is a work of necessity; and so comply with the temptation. This may be repeatedly the case until you turn the place of worship into a market place, and the house of God into a den of thieves. Carefully distinguish between necessity and convenience; and call nothing a work of necessity, but what the word of God makes so.

When you are attacked by any of these temptations, resist them firmly and perseveringly; but remember your safest method will be to keep out of the way. In order to this, spend a proper proportion of the time in secret meditation, prayer and praise, a suitable portion in family worship and instruction. When you attend a place of publick worship, avoid promiscuous little companies, who spend their time in worldly chat. Either enter into conversation with some pious friend on subjects suitable to the day, retire by yourselves, or go straight into the house of worship, and spend the time before service begins in serious meditations or devout ejaculations. If there are more services than one, observe the same method in the interval. After worship tarry not in the crowd, but go straight home, making the exercises of the day the subject of your meditations.

A christian may find agreeable employment sufficient on the whole of a Sabbath, even when deprived of an opportunity of attending public worship, reading the holy scriptures and other pious practical writings; meditating thereon; secret and family prayer and praise; instructing children and servants, contemplating on the works of creation, providence and redemption; examining into the state of his own soul; trying his conduct by the word of God; visiting the sick and afflicted, when there is occasion; affording such help and consolation, as circumstances may allow. These exercises and employments, which are the proper work of a Sabbath, are, I say, abundantly sufficient for the whole day, and are certainly agreeable to the character of a christian, and calculated for his edification and comfort. How unhappy must be the state of our minds, if silent Sabbaths are a weariness to us,

and we under a kind of necessity to fly to worldly conversation, trifling amusements or neighbourly visits, to wear away the tedious moments, or support us under their weight! How shocking to hear christians arguing against a strictly religious observation of the Sabbath! Surely it ought to be the delight of their souls, and the institution excite their ardent gratitude and praise. If a Sabbath of twenty four hours is a weariness to us, how shall we bear an eternal Sabbath!

(5.) Neglect not family religion, and especially the frequent religious instruction of children and servants (if you have any) in the principles of the christian religion: this is a principal end of the institution of marriage, and one of the most important duties of your life. On the faithful and proper performance of it, depend your own peace of conscience and the interests of civil and religious society.

The neglect of this important duty is perhaps more common in our day and country, than it ever was at any time or in any part of the christian world before; which is a consideration truly alarming; it threatens much damage to the interests of society. Tho' there is scarce any duty more plainly enjoined in scripture, there are but few more entirely neglected by many christian parents. Parents, especially if they are aiming a little at genteel life, are taking considerable pains to give their children a polite education, they are careful to furnish them with decent apparel, food for the nourishment of their bodies, and to restore them to health when sick: but how little pains do they take with them as immortal beings, as candidates for eternal bliss! Their precious souls are neglected, religious instruction is withheld, no proper pains are taken to imbue their minds with piety and true moral virtue.

Let your children, like Timothy, know the holy scriptures from their early days. Do not fall in with the modern notion that children should not read the scriptures, until they come to years of maturity; for if they do not read them until then, they will probably never read them with much attention. They will get their taste so vitiated, and such a relish for productions more agreeable to depraved nature, that they will have but little appetite for the serious instructions of the bible.

Never consent that your child, and especially your daughter, marry an enemy to the christian religion for the sake of family, fortune, or polite education. If you do, you virtually consent that your grand children should be drawn off from the religion of Jesus, and brought up in heathenism: yea worse than heathenism; for infidelity in a christian land is a greater evil than what prevailed among the ancient Heathen, and sets men further from the kingdom of heaven. If you can do

this you are no warm friend to the cause of Christ, or the true interest of posterity. You know who it was that sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. How many christian parents have, in this way, condemned their offspring to Heathen darkness, for the sake of what they call an advantageous match for a daughter. Rather pick up the poorest young man you can find in your country, who has common sense, good morals, and sound religious principles; and prefer him to the most sensible wealthy and genteel infidel in the land.

I do not advise you to use violence with your children, with regard to their marriage; I have seldom observed this to end well; but warn them faithfully of the evil, of the sin and danger of such connexions. If they will persist in spite of every tender and rational method, clear your skirts of the guilt. Never let it be said, never let your conscience say, that you consented to your children's ruin.

(6.) I would say a few things relative to your particular calling and secular interest, and your conduct with respect to these.

Every thing in this world, is so fluctuating, that success in your worldly business is, and ever will be uncertain. You may err in your plans, or those which are best laid, may be frustrated by the hand of providence. That God who governs the affairs of men may see it best to disappoint you, knowing that mediocrity, or even poverty, is better for you than wealth. Endeavour to have your minds prepared for such events. In order to this, never overrate the things of time. Be humble before your Maker: remember that every blessing is forfeited and may justly be denied you, bread and water to nourish your bodies, and even the meanest clothes to cover you. Never think a fine coat or a fine habit essential to your happiness; or that you must be miserable, if you cannot live in an elegant style. Having food and raiment, learn therewith to be content.

Overrating the things of this life and placing much happiness in things of little comparative importance, is the source of much misery. View things in the light of eternity, and make it your business to lay up treasure in heaven, and you never can be poor: seek that honour that cometh from God, and you never will be mean and disgraceful: be clothed in the garments of salvation, and you will not be meanly dressed: feed on the bread of life, and you will never starve: be and conduct like the children of God, and you may humbly rejoice in the most noble parentage.

It is my desire, and for which I endeavour to pray to God, that you may have a competency of the good things of this life: but should I see you growing up very rich, and laying

up large estates for your children, I do not know that it would give me the least satisfaction. I should view you and them, as getting into a situation more unfriendly to piety and virtue, and even the happiness of this life. In a country, more money than is necessary for a circulating medium is hurtful; and so more riches than is necessary to answer the demands of nature and society, to furnish the means of support and comfort, is an injury to the possessor; and when it becomes common, a national disadvantage.

I have often wondered that christian parents should be desirous of leaving large estates to their children, when they must know, if ever they think on the subject, that it commonly proves a real disadvantage to them. How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!

If your worldly circumstances should be urgent, and business call for much of your time and thoughts, do not count this a sufficient excuse for neglecting religious duties in your closets or families; but be so much the more engaged to consecrate a suitable portion of your time to reading, meditation and prayer. By these means endeavour to keep your hearts with all diligence. Perhaps you would find it most convenient and adviseable to go to rest in good time, rise early, and devote a suitable portion of the morning to religious exercises; and, by these means, prepare your minds for entering on the business of the day in the fear of God, and pursuing it with integrity and diligence. Never think the business of your particular calling an excuse for neglecting, or hurrying over the business of your general calling, or forgetting your God, your Saviour, your immortal souls.

Do not divide your time between God and the world; but believe and realize that you are wholly the Lord's. Pursue the common business of life and discharge the several duties thereof, because they are duties you owe to God, yourselves or your fellow creatures: do it in obedience to God, with a view to his glory, and agreeable to the directions of his word. Thus you may serve your God and walk with him all the day long. This is the way to turn every thing into gold.

If you have a multiplicity of business, endeavour to arrange it properly and keep it in as regular order as you can, and thus avoid intricacies and perplexities. These will not only hinder the success of your business; but what is much worse, will draw your thoughts and affections away from God and your duty, and indispose your minds for the one thing needful.

Carefully guard against contracting large debts, which you will find it very difficult to discharge; of disappointing your

creditors, and feigning a number of excuses for failure of payment. This, however common the practice, is real injustice; as truly so as cheating or stealing: and may expose you to vices, you may now think yourselves incapable of committing. We cannot sincerely pray not to be led into temptations, when we are voluntarily running into them. Rather be contented with moderate incomes, and learn to steer near the shore, than expose yourselves to such temptations. When a man makes these bold ventures, there are commonly two vicious dispositions secretly lurking in his heart; immoderate self love, or desire of gain, and a disregard to justice.

Do not indulge a speculating disposition, and be watching for opportunities to take advantage of the necessities or ignorance of your fellow creatures, in order to get their property or money without a reasonable compensation. Never take an unrighteous advantage of another, even when the law will support you in it; for there is imperfection in all human laws and human courts. Always remember there is a court above, in which all these causes will have another hearing, where every error will be rectified, and righteous judgment given and executed.

The vice I am now warning you against, I am afraid is very common, even among those who are called christians; but this does not excuse it, and ought not to reconcile our consciences to it. Dishonesty is not the less so, because it is common, nor because it is practised by men esteemed reputable. These circumstances however may lessen our view of the evil of it, cause it to sit lighter upon our consciences, give force to temptations, and thus increase the danger of your becoming guilty: it ought therefore to put you upon your guard and engage you more firmly to act uprightly.

If providence should smile on your labour and prosper the work of your hands, so that you should increase in wealth, do not so ascribe it to your own wisdom and diligence, as to think your wealth your own in such a sense as to authorize you to lay it out as you please. Remember that it is the gift of God, or the loan of his providence; that you are accountable to him for the use you make of it.

God allows you what is sufficient for your own and family's support; but he does not bestow wealth that you may waste it in vanity and folly. He gives riches for no such trifling purposes; but that you may do good to your fellow creatures, and advance his glory in the world; and thus lay up treasures in heaven. If I may be allowed so to speak, I am afraid the christians of our day and country, will be very poor when they get to heaven: they will find but very little treasure laid up

there. The poor widow with her two mites, will have a better fortune than many of our christian ladies, who are now covered with silks. Many men, who have nothing to give to others but the assistance of their hands, will have better estates than gentlemen, who spend their substance in what they call supporting their rank and station, adorning their families with superfluous ornaments, keeping a sumptuous table, and entertaining their wealthy friends with sumptuous fare, with wines and ardent spirits. See Matt. xxv, 33.

Endeavour to quench an ardent thirst for following the many expensive, capricious, foolish fashions of a gay and thoughtless multitude. By gratifying this thirst many christians, and christian ministers too, greatly dishonour and injure the cause of Christ, and grieve the hearts of their christian brethren.

I do not mean to recommend an affectation of singularity or rusticity; but that plain simplicity, which is most decent in itself, most consistent with the dignity of human nature, and will be most approved by every sensible person. I do not recollect ever to have been acquainted with any person, male or female, who was the more esteemed for being *very fine* or *very fashionable* by the judicious and virtuous of either sex.

Duly consider the great evil of complying with others in follies and levities of conversation and behaviour, contrary to your own reason and the secret whispers of conscience; for this has a direct tendency to harden your hearts and sear your consciences. Sin, though comparatively small, committed against the present remonstrances of conscience, is extremely aggravated, and has a pernicious influence on the heart.

3. Always realize it to be your duty to treat all your fellow creatures with civility, justice, kindness and respect; but when you find a christian, who behaves agreeable to his profession, who is modest, meek, temperate and just, treat him with particular kindness and respect; and that, however poor he may be, of however little estimation in the world, or of whatever denomination: even if a slave, think him not beneath your notice. "An honest man's the noblest work of God:" therefore show more respect to such however, poor or despised, than to rakes, the profane, or dishonest, tho' the latter should abound in wealth, be caressed by their acquaintance, or exalted in their stations.

4. I close this head of advice by affectionately exhorting you to the important duty of self examination. In this, be frequent, solemn and impartial. Know yourselves, and understand the rule of your conduct. Get right ideas of the christian temper and practice, according to the word of God. Consider our strong natural proneness to self deception, and the

direful consequences of mistaking our true state and character. When ever you find things amiss, never rest until you get them rectified. Do not sink into despondency, and give up the work as desperate. When you inquire what is truth on this point, go not away without an answer. Be more engaged to settle accounts between God and your souls, than to settle your books of trade and commerce. When your debts are great, and you have nothing to pay, never rest until they are all blotted out by the blood of Jesus. Should you find your religious profession and conduct inconsistent, never give up with that which is right in order to be consistent, but rectify what is amiss. Neglect not religious ordinances, because your temper and practice disagree with them; but reform your temper and practice. A contrary conduct would appear like a fixed determination to renounce religion, and become consistently wicked. Deceive not yourselves with the notion, that to lay aside religious duties and ordinances is necessary in order to honesty. It must be a very unhappy kind of honesty to be sincerely engaged to forsake God, and live to the world and the flesh. At the same time guard against formality in your devotions, and particularly in your attendance on sealing ordinances. Never be contented without the graces of the Spirit, suitable to the occasion, in actual exercise.

You may think it strange that under this and the former head, I mention so many things which are so common and familiar to you. It is because I esteem them much more important, than things uncommon and curious.

III. On your conduct as members of civil society.

I have never made politicks much my study, and for many years have studiously avoided meddling with the subject; and therefore on this point I shall say but little.

Ever since the establishment of American independence, and even for some time before, I have very much doubted whether we had political virtue sufficient to support our happy, free, republican government. Our relation to Europe, and intercourse with nations far advanced in the vices usually produced by opulence, had begun to contaminate our morals, and destroy that honesty and simplicity of manners, which are necessary in free states, especially in their infancy. I am now pretty thoroughly convinced that we have not a sufficiency of virtue. I expect that you, or at least your children, will live to see a miserable reverse of affairs.

This persuasion does not arise from want of wisdom or faithfulness in the present officers of the general or particular governments, which have come to my knowledge, or which I have reason to suspect; but from our not having that degree

of virtue in the mass of the people, which is necessary and sufficient for the preservation and support of our independence and happiness. I think it morally impossible that we should long continue free and happy, without a reformation in our principles and manners; and know of nothing that can produce this reformation but religion; religion to influence the mind, and give it a happy direction.

Perhaps the first attempt to govern a nation without religion was made in France: and, judging by the event, we have no reason to admire the plan.

If I understand the signs of the times, we are ripening fast for political ruin. In our state, the lowest and meanest kind of bribery has destroyed the political virtue of the people: they have lost all sense of the importance of the right of suffrage. As the body of the people is, so is or will be, the representative body. These things I mention as an introduction to a few words of advice.

1. Always treat the officers of the government under which you live with respect. Never credit any report raised against them, without the fullest evidence of their guilt: especially the newspaper squibs of candidates for places. Their puffing and swelling, treat with the contempt due to the frog in the fable.

Endeavour to live peaceable lives, and be as useful as you can in private stations. In order to this, speak evil of no man or woman in private or publick stations, except when duty calls you to it. By proper government in this respect, much will be prevented. You should especially refrain from this vice, when you think yourselves injured, or are in a passion.

2. Meddle but little in political matters, unless you have a better opportunity for usefulness than seems now to present itself. Should any of you have a call to act in a publick capacity, be moderate in your thinking, speaking and acting in state affairs. Never be a fire-hot republican, nor a fire-hot federalist. As truth ordinarily lies between two extremes, there you are to seek it.

3. Even if you have talents, and a door should open for your executing any civil office, I cannot recommend it; because a man cannot act agreeable to the tenor of his oath, without rendering himself the butt of envy or malice. A justice of the peace, for instance, is bound to be guilty of perjury on the penalty of incurring the displeasure of his fellow citizens, and exposing himself to their malicious efforts to destroy his reputation and influence. I am very much mistaken if many of our justices are not extremely ignorant of their duty, or guilty of unfaithfulness.

The horrid impiety and profanity of modern armies should incline every good man to avoid them, as far as he can consistent with his duty to his country. It is to be feared they are Seminaries of vice and infidelity. Tho' it is true a military office is esteemed very honourable; the art of killing, and a commission to exercise it, highly raises a man's reputation; yet, in truth, the commanders of armies are very commonly nothing better than the servile tools of avarice and ambition. The high encomiums passed on great generals by historians and poets, have a vast and unhappy influence in corrupting the minds and morals of mankind, and especially of youth who read such compositions with much avidity. To learn in early life to admire bad characters is a very unhappy thing.

4. Should you be competently qualified for it, and have a probable prospect of success in an attempt to represent a portion of the people in the legislature, never make the attempt, unless you can do it without descending to those truly vicious and mean arts, which are too commonly practised in this state, and perhaps some others: I mean those of defaming your rivals, boasting of your own intentions or abilities, soliciting of votes, or interest, or meanly bribing the people by spiritous liquors. These practices are very pernicious, and mean to the lowest degree. It would be a disgrace to you, or any man, to carry an election by such arts as those. A house of representatives, elected by such means are a disgrace to the country they represent. Such may imagine they have the honour of representing their county, and think they are serving their country; but they are greatly mistaken. The truth is they are not serving, but corrupting and ruining the people. The means they use to obtain their election do more injury, by corrupting the morals and political principles of men, than all their services in the legislature do good.

If you have talents for usefulness and influence in the state, or county, or neighbourhood where you live, consider them as sacred to the service of piety and virtue. If you do or shall possess wealth, and this should give you influence, consider it as a talent committed to you to improve to the honour of God and the good of your fellow men; and not as the means of raising you to the pinnacle of earthly honour. For these purposes you were created, and all your possessions should be devoted. In this way you should be rich in good works, rich towards God, and lay up treasure in heaven. This you are to consider as the one thing needful, and make the principal object of your serious attention and earnest pursuit.

The third head of advice concerns chiefly the males: women have but little to do with politicks. Their sphere of action is

more limited; but yet very important. A woman at home, diligently and prudently discharging the duties of her station, promoting industry and economy, training up children in piety and virtue, serves her country better, and merits more esteem than a blustering politician. Therefore

My dear daughters, let me affectionately advise you to consider the importance of your station, and make yourselves well acquainted with it's duties, what they are and how to be performed. Here you will find sufficient scope for all the abilities you possess.

Labour to cure yourselves and your children of those little vanities, as they are called, which are natural to the human race in it's present degenerate state; and perhaps more so in your sex than the other. This vanity is a regard to decency and a desire of pleasing, degenerated into a vice. The principle must not be eradicated; but it is to be reformed and rightly directed.

For want of proper care in parents, and particularly in mothers, the lives of many young women, especially the daughters of parents in affluent circumstances, are a constant rotation of vanity and folly, which unfits them more and more for every important duty of this life, and indisposes them for all the serious and more important business of the life to come. If they are good humoured and do not suffer themselves to be ruined by some vile rake, they are called innocent good sort of girls: but in reality they spend their time and waste their lives, in a very criminal way: they are daily contracting great guilt. This will appear to be an undoubted fact, if we only allow, that they are bound to remember their creator in the days of their youth, to love the Lord their God with all their hearts, and seek salvation as the principal business of their lives. I say, *a constant rotation*; for when they return from one circle of folly, their chief business at home is to prepare for another. It is your business to point out to them the evil and danger of such a course of life, and impress their minds with some of the most important ends, for which they were designed; to train them up for what is more worthy of a rational creature and candidate for eternity, teaching them the worth of their precious souls and importance of redeeming grace.

Begin with your sons in time, before their natural pride and obstinacy gain strength, and they imagine themselves above the instructions and reproofs of a mother. Endeavour to instil into their minds a reverence for the Deity, and love to his ways. Remember that though you should be unsuccessful at present, the principles you may now inculcate may be

revived in their minds, and set home upon their hearts, when you are resting in your graves.

Teach your daughters to despise the character of a vain fop, and especially a vile debauchee. Whatever pretensions a man may make to love, and however ardent his passion, if he attempts the chastity of the object of his affections, he gives the most unequivocal proof of his want of genuine love. Love is a chaste passion, which would by no means injure its object.

Perhaps if mothers had given timely instructions on this head, it might have prevented the ruin of many daughters. Young women should be taught to treat young men of bad characters with an indifference that they will feel if they have any sense: and on some occasions with a contempt, they will sensibly feel. This is a duty they owe to themselves and to society. Nothing in the power of young women, is so well calculated to reform from the vice I have in my eye, or to prevent its spread and prevalence.

Much has been said about the education of daughters, and attempts made to teach them grammar, geography, philosophy, &c: in some instances these may properly make a part of their education; but should never make the principal part. In general it is of more importance in the education of girls, to teach them how to manage the business of the kitchen, the parlour, the nursery and the dairy, the duties of subjection and obedience to parents, and other superiors, and of respect and kindness to all. They should be also, and especially, taught to reverence their maker, seek his favour, thank him for his mercies and submit to his government.

As far as you have ability and shall find occasion, ever be ready, especially among your own sex, to bear an honourable testimony in favour of virtue and religion. Never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ: it is the wisdom of God and the power of God. I do not mean that you should be fond of displaying your talents in religious disputation: but that you show yourselves above the frowns or sneers of impiety and infidelity. These, should they prevail to a certain degree, would be the ruin of your sex and destruction of human nature.

If you should suffer reproach for your attachment to the cause of religion, submit to it with cheerfulness; and let it rather strengthen than lessen your attachment. Always prefer men of real piety: they are your best friends, and the best friends of human nature.

If any of you should be so unhappy as to have husbands, who neglect family worship, and the religious education of your children, I know this will greatly distress you, unless you are sinfully careless about these things yourselves: but

let it not sink you into neglect of your duty; but rather stir you up to more diligence and faithfulness.

If you cannot have social worship, in your parlour or your chamber, have it in your closet. Enter into your closet, take your dear little fatherless children with you, spread your own case and their's before the Lord; humbly invoke his name, and earnestly implore his grace and blessing on yourselves, your families, the church of God and on all mankind. Thus teach your children to reverence the God of their fathers, and seek the great salvation.

Now my dear children, with my whole heart I would commit you to God. May every needed temporal blessing, and all the riches of his grace rest upon you. This is the earnest desire and prayer of your

Affectionate Father,

DAVID RICE.

A NARRATIVE OF THE STATE OF RELIGION,

Within the bounds of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church; and of the General Associations of Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts Proper, during the last year.

THE Church of God, that has been bought with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the most interesting community on earth. With its prosperity and happiness, the Triune Jehovah has identified his own honour and glory. A community, so dear to God, and so intimately connected with the highest interests of our fellow men, cannot fail to command the best wishes and the fervent prayers of all who feel a genuine friendship to the Saviour. 'Tis, therefore, that the General Assembly, confident that the churches under our care feel a deep interest in the cause of Zion, would communicate to them a summary view of the state of religion within our bounds, and of the churches in connection with us, as shewn from the reports presented by the several Presbyteries, and those of the General Associations of Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

We have, perhaps, never, Dear Brethren, been called to address you, when we had fewer causes of mourning and grief than at present. But whilst, to a very pleasing extent, believers honor their profession by a godly conversation, and