

THE  
POOR ORPHAN'S LEGACY,

BEING A SHORT COLLECTION OF

Godly Counsels and Exhortations

TO A

YOUNG RISING GENERATION.

PRIMARILY DESIGNED BY THE AUTHOR, FOR HIS OWN  
CHILDREN, BUT PUBLISHED THAT OTHERS MAY  
ALSO REAP BENEFIT BY THEM.

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# ADVERTISEMENT.

A PROFESSOR in one of our theological seminaries thus introduces the following tract:

“ I write to bring to the notice of the Board of Publication, a tract, which to me and several judicious friends whom I have consulted, seems eminently worthy of republication. I have it from what I consider *reliable* oral tradition, that the author was the Rev. John Thompson of Donegal Presbytery, who came from Ireland as a probationer to New York in the year 1715, spent the latter part of his life as a missionary in Virginia, and either died in Buffalo Congregation, Prince Edward, Va., or at least lived there nearly until his death. You will find a sketch of his biography in Webster's History of the Presbyterian Church, p. 355. You will see that the copy I send you is the second edition,

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**THE LIBRARY**  
Union Theological Seminary  
RICHMOND, VA.

put forth, A. D. 1792, from Richmond, Va., at the expence of one Andrew Baker. Mr. Baker was a ruling elder of Buffaloe in his day, and has pious descendants there still : among whom is an elder in that Church. I should like that old Andrew Baker's introduction should go along, as a specimen of old time piety. The tract itself seems to me to be eminently characterized by that fulness of scriptural truth, solidity, and propriety, which mark the best works of the 17th century. This old relict (the only one, I suppose, accessible) belongs to a friend and neighbour. He is willing to let it be used for the issue of a new edition of the tract. In the event of its being thus multiplied, so that he could supply himself and friends with other copies, I have no doubt he would be willing to let the original go into the archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society ; which probably has the other writings of Mr. Thompson, and would be glad to complete the set."

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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It is the counsel and command of the great and eminent Apostle of the Gentiles, that "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God." The importance and propriety of this precept, appear to have been impressed upon his own mind in an extraordinary manner. No doubt he well knew that the language of example, though silent, is equally, if not more striking than the loudest precepts. Being conscious of the uprightness and sincerity of his own intentions and desires, and of the care which he took to maintain a conscience void of offence toward God and man, he exhorts the Corinthians in the xi chapter and 1st verse of his first epistle to them, to "be followers of him even as he also was of Christ." This admonition is as necessary to be observed by the professors of the religion of

Jesus at the present period of time, as it was in the Apostolic age.

The author of the following performance was a person who appeared to have an abiding sense of the obligations under which God had laid him to live to his glory, as deeply impressed upon his mind as perhaps the most of Christians who lived in his day. I esteem it as a distinguishing privilege conferred upon me, that I was honoured with his friendship and favoured with an intimate acquaintance with him. The close and tender walk which he appeared to maintain with God, the consistency of his practice with his profession, his holy conversation which manifested his heavenly mindedness, together with the well regulated zeal for God's glory which he discovered,—all conspired to endear him to the hearts of his Christian connections and acquaintances. By the blessing of God and the concurrence of these circumstances, his labours were rendered successful; to the truth of which, I doubt not but there are many living witnesses at this day.

His reasons for publishing the following counsels, he has communicated in his short prefatory address to the reader. My reasons for desiring a republication of them are three: 1. If I know

my own heart, it is, that the glory of God may be promoted, and that the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom and precious souls may be advanced; which ought to be the prevailing desire of every professing friend and follower of Jesus. 2. Because there are scarcely any entire copies of the first edition now extant. And 3. In order that those persons for whom they were originally designed and written, may be profited by them.

For my own part, I do firmly believe that if ever I received advantage from any mean of instruction of a similar nature, I have been profited by this. That God may attend it with his divine blessing—make it instrumental in promoting his glory and the eternal and best interest of precious souls, is the sincere desire and earnest prayer of

ANDREW BAKER.

*Spring Creek, Prince Edward }  
county, Virginia, Feb. 23, 1792. }*

## TO THE READER.

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I THINK it convenient to acquaint thee with the reasons which moved me to expose these counsels to public view, which were originally designed for my own children, and they are these :

First, There's a necessity for their being printed, that my own children might reap the benefit of them. 2. I rather should rejoice than grudge that others besides should reap benefit by all or any of my poor labours. I am encouraged hereunto by some Christian friends, out of the zeal which they have for public edification ; "*bonum quo communius, eo melius,*" the more extensive and communicative any good is, the better it is.

If my plain and homely way of speaking to my own children may seem to any not so suitable to the edification of the public ; for removing of this inconveniency, I desire that such as may think so

may (while they are reading) either suppose the author to be their own father, or that their father had composed and prepared these counsels for their use; and perhaps it may, at least in part, remove or prevent any displeasure which otherwise might be conceived at this performance, or any part or passages of it.

I shall not be at much pains in making an apology for the homeliness of this little performance, or the meanness of the dress it appears in; those who are delighted with, or hungering after the kernel, will not be much taken up in making remarks upon the deformity, or in admiring the beauty of the shell. Children are the party with whom I have to do in this discourse; it is the profit of such I am aiming at, and of my own children in particular; and consequently I endeavour to suit myself to their capacity, in order to promote their saving conversion, spiritual edification, and eternal salvation. And, reader, whoever thou art, who mayest think this little essay too childish for thine adult, masculine, polished capacity, I desire thee to do one of these two things, viz., either whilst thou art reading, take notice of the matter and scope as abstracted from its mean dress; or if that will not do, let it alone for

the use of those for whom it is designed, and whose capacity it better suits; seeing thou mayest easily suit thine adult and more polished capacity with more elaborate pieces. Only I entreat thee not to discourage children from improving what was sincerely designed for their good, lest hereby thou do them more harm than ever it will be in thy power to do them good. As when I was writing, I had more regard to the matter and design than the outward dress, or any applause arising from thence; so I expect that those readers who desire edification more than amusement, will easily wink at what is amiss or defective in the form. And as to the censures of the more profane or censorious readers, who are most if not only taken up with the dress of words, (this being too much the genius or rather the distemper of the present age,) I am not much anxious. Those who get good hereby will not be apt to censure; and those who get none, both they and I had more need to lament their loss, than regard their censure.

However, reader, I commit thee and these sheets unto the care and blessing of Him whose words are spirit and life; and shall pray, that by a divine blessing upon this and other proper

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TO THE READER.

means, both thou and I may be helped to advance to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, in whom I am willing and desirous to promote thy soul's interest.

FAREWELL.

THE

## POOR ORPHAN'S LEGACY.

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DEAR children:—Some years have elapsed since I first began to entertain thoughts of preparing some words of wholesome advice, which might be of some lasting use and benefit to you, even when I am laid in the dust.

It hath pleased God in his holy and wise dispensation of providence, so to order and overrule things concerning me in this world, that I have not been in a condition either to make any provision for your worldly settlement, or even to afford you but a very small degree of education and learning, and far short of what is commonly given, especially by ministers of the gospel to their children; and it seems to grow still more unlikely that ever I shall be in a condition to do any thing of value in these respects for you. And besides, the 'provi-

dence of God hath so ordered matters, that I am obliged to commit some of you to the care of others, not being in a condition to do it myself; and perhaps, I shall be under a necessity to do so with more of you before it be long: and my troubles in this world seeming to increase rather than diminish, and some of you being yet but in your younger days, whom I can scarcely expect to live so long as to see advanced to the age of maturity—these, with many other like considerations, have prevailed upon me to attempt to compose something by way of advice, that having it by you, it may be of some use and benefit to you, and you may hear your affectionate and tender father as it were speaking to you, and unfolding his very bowels, even when his body lies in the dust. And I would beseech and intreat you, yea, I charge and command you, as a father who hath the spiritual and eternal concerns of your souls as much at heart as anything I can mention, next to my own eternal salvation; I say, I intreat and charge you, that you not only diligently peruse and ponder, but also carefully and perseveringly practise what I shall here offer for your good.

FIRST then, in general, I entreat and charge you to make serious practical religion your main and

principal work and business while you are in the world. It will not be enough that you mind so much of it as may serve you as a pass through this life as Christians, like neighbours and others, in the esteem of your friends and acquaintances. If your love to God and holiness be not above your love to all worldly things; if your care and concern for your souls be not more than for all other concerns in the world, I never expect to enjoy your company in our heavenly Father's house above.

And as an argument and motive, consider, you are engaged, every one of you, to no less than this, in a most solemn manner by your baptismal covenant. I promised solemnly to do my best endeavour (alas, how far have I come short!) to engage you all to this, when I offered and dedicated you all to the Lord in your baptism. And God is witness, if ever I was earnest and sincere in any of my prayers to God, it was when praying to him on your behalf, that he would make you his own children by regeneration and adoption.

My dear children, the very supposition and fear of any of you coming short of this, wounds and terrifies my very heart; and this is a time and age of the world wherein serious practical godliness is grown so scarce, and worn so much,

out of fashion; so little of the relish of it to be discovered in the common discourse and conversation of professors, especially the young rising generation, that I am afraid, my dear children, lest you, or any of you be carried away with the current of a lifeless profession, and at last be found ranked among the goats, on your Judge's left hand, whose portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

I do acknowledge, that as I have come woefully short in all the duties that have been incumbent upon me, so I have too far come short as to frequent and earnest pressing of those things upon you. Yet, my dear children, so many of you as are capable of observing, can witness for me, that in some measure I have endeavoured to persuade you to them; and if any of you persist in the neglect of them, it will be the way to lose all the benefit of my prayers, and other endeavours for your good, and your own souls to boot; and then woe will be to you, that you ever were born. I am sure there are thousands triumphing in glory this day, who never had the tenth part of the pains taken upon them that I have taken upon you; although I must still say, I have come ex-

ceedingly short of what I ought to have done in this matter.

My dear children, what a dreadful disappointment will it be, if any of you at last find yourselves ranked among the goats, after all the pains that have been taken upon you, all the pains that perhaps you shall have taken upon yourselves, to attend and hear sermons, to read the scriptures and other good books, to get your catechism by heart, (as we commonly say,) to pray in secret, besides all other common duties of religion, and at the same time you see many others standing at Christ's right hand, who were far short of you in respect of those things; and all this for want of this one thing, viz., your not being godly in good earnest, your not making your duty to God; and the saving your precious immortal souls, your main work, care, and study; although you have been told the necessity of this again and again! O my children, for the Lord's sake, see to prevent this so dismal a doom, by being godly in good earnest, by making true practical religion your main work, aim, and study. But I must be more particular, and therefore

SECONDLY, I exhort and entreat you to be much in reading the Holy Scriptures; they are the only

complete rule to direct you how to glorify God, and how to attain to the enjoyment of him for ever; and for your more profitable using and improving this heavenly book, I would have you observe these few directions:

*Direction 1.* Endeavour as much as possible to read some portion thereof every day.

*Direct. 2.* Let your ordinary reading be regular and orderly, that is, go not from place to place, but take the Scriptures in order from beginning to ending, except such places which, because of the difficulty of proper names, you are not able to go through; yet this is not to hinder the reading of particular portions of scripture out of your ordinary, as particular occasions may sometimes require.

*Direct. 3.* Before you begin to read, send up a serious prayer to God, if it were never so short, that he may bless what you are about to read, and make it profitable to you.

*Direct. 4.* Let your hearts and minds be attentive to what you read, and be ready to take notice of any, yea, of every thing, as far as you can, that may be for your edification; and what you notice particularly of this kind, strive to fix it in your memories.

*Direct. 5.* Accustom yourselves to meditate upon the most remarkable passages of what you read, afterwards when you are about your worldly employments.

*Direct. 6.* Endeavour, as far as in you lies, to put what you read in daily practice in your lives and conversations, viz., by addressing yourselves to the duties which you find any way recommended in the word, and resolving, watching, and guarding against the sins that are spoken against therein.

THIRDLY, I exhort and intreat you, as a main and principal part of your work, to make sure of your conversion or regeneration; for unless you be born again, you shall never enter into the kingdom of God. And in order to this, I would help you with these following directions:

*Direct. 1.* Labour to be daily and feelingly sensible of your corrupt, sinful state by nature, especially of that monstrous wickedness that is in your heart, viz., enmity against God, rebellion against his laws, and in short, the spring and root of all and all manner of wickedness; for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, and blasphemies, Mark x. 19.

*Direct. 2.* Be earnest with God in prayer to send his Holy Spirit to convert you, and implant the seed of true grace in your souls; wrestle with him for this, give him no rest till he do it, Luke xviii. 1, 6, and xi. 8; nor take any quiet to yourselves until you obtain it. Your eternal ALL depends upon your obtaining this; you may as soon expect that devils may be saved or go to heaven; as you, unless you be converted.

*Direct. 3.* Labour to see so much of the evil of sin as to make you hate it because it is sin; and to see so much of the beauty and loveliness of holiness; as to cause you to love it for its own sake. The one debaseth and destroyeth the amiable perfections of our reasonable nature, and the other improves, increases, adorns, and beautifies the same, and makes us meet and capable to converse with God himself.

*Direct. 4.* Be diligent in the use of all appointed means, such as hearing the word preached, reading the Scriptures and other good and godly books, discoursing with godly persons about heavenly things, still looking to God for his blessing to make those means effectual. Let not sinful bashfulness hinder you to seek after godly discourse with others.

*Direct. 5.* Endeavour in the mean time to live, as much as possibly you can, like saints, or those who are already converted, watching against all sin and temptations thereunto, in thought, word, or deed; and striving to be sincere and conscientious in performing all commanded duties as well as possibly you can; making daily confession, and daily sorrowing for your sins and short-coming, daily praying in earnest for pardon for your sins and victory over your lusts.

FOURTHLY, I exhort and intreat you, my dear children, personally to give up and bind yourselves to God by covenant, even according unto the terms of the new covenant of grace; and that I may prevail with you, I beseech you, consider,

1. When you were baptized, you were bound by this very covenant, and will remain bound by it as long as you live, yea and you must and will be judged by it whether you give up yourself to God personally by your own act and deed or no; so that your refusing or delaying to do this, serves you nothing, but contrariwise, makes the case with you worse; which will appear if you consider,

2. That this is your duty commanded by God,  
 "But yield yourselves up unto God, as those that

are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Rom. vi. 13. And

3. It is only by this new covenant of grace that you can expect to be saved; and how can you be saved by it while you refuse to enter into it, or be bound by it?

4. If you sincerely give up yourselves to God according to this covenant, he will surely give you grace and strength to fulfil your part of it.

5. By the personal covenanting with God, you will be obliged to no new duty which you were not bound to before, but rather shall be sure of new strength to perform the former duties, which out of the covenant you have no ground to expect or hope for.

6. Until you thus personally covenant with God, you cannot be acceptable guests at the Lord's table, where believers are called to set their seals to the covenant of grace, which supposeth that the covenant was made and consented to by both parties before.

But perhaps some of you may not clearly understand what I mean by personal covenanting. Well,

I will endeavour to inform you in as plain words as I can.

When a person, being fully convinced of his lost and perishing state by nature, and hearing from the word of God, that Christ hath laid down his life to save such sinful creatures, and also that; if we would be saved by Christ's death, we must truly repent of all our sins, must receive Christ, or give consent with all our heart that he should be our Saviour, and be willing to renounce all our sins and lusts, and give ourselves up without reserve to his service, in soul and body all our days—when a person deeply sensible of these things, and affected with them, and fully persuaded that it is both his interest and duty so to do, after he hath deliberately considered the matter, takes an opportunity in secret prayer, not only to confess and bewail his sin and misery, and to pray for mercy and pardon through Christ, but also to declare unto God in as express and suitable words as he can, that he truly repents of his sins, that he longs to be free not only from the guilt, but also the service and bondage of them, that he is heartily content to receive Christ as his only Saviour, and that he is heartily willing to be laid under all the obligations to holiness and new obedience that

the gospel requires and enjoins; and withal looks unto and depends not upon his own strength, but the grace of Christ and assistance of his Holy Spirit, for the fulfilling of those engagements;—when a person thus acts, he may be said personally to covenant with God. But then much care should be had about the frame of heart at such a time, that it be both serious and sincere, (and if it can be attained, lively and fervent,) when we thus close a bargain with the Lord of hosts for eternal life; for first, the more a person is affected with these things when he is employed about them, the remembrance will stay the better with him; and secondly, there will be the greater hope of a faithful fulfilling of such solemn promises and engagements on your part.

You had need also, my dear children, to be very deliberate in this matter; that is, to consider what you are about, particularly the extent of the obligations which, by personally covenanting, you take upon yourselves, together with the willingness of your hearts and the sincerity of your purposes, desires, and resolutions, as to the fulfilment of them; to consider, that thereby you expressly engage and vow to God that you will, all the days of your life, at least earnestly and sincerely endeavour

to be holy in all manner of conversation; that you will strive after the performance of all duty, and that in opposition to all temptations to the contrary; that you will constantly and perpetually, at least endeavour to forsake all sin, to mortify all your lusts, and no more to allow yourselves to have friendly fellowship with the works of darkness. I say, you had need to consider this, and count the costs beforehand, to examine your own hearts, if you are sincerely willing to be bound up to all the strictness that the holy laws of religion require; for without this it is to be doubted whether your covenant transaction will or can be acceptable to God as sincere.

And here I will endeavour to remove a stumbling block out of your way, which this last caution may seem to lay, and it is this; perhaps some of you may say within yourselves, Sure I dare not covenant with God upon such strict terms, for I shall never be able to live up to them, and therefore I had better not engage in such a manner. But, my dear children, this must not discourage you from this duty, a duty upon which your salvation so much depends; for,

1. The terms are no harder to you than they

are to all other believers; others have ventured and succeeded, and why may not you?

2. If you keep out of the covenant you must certainly perish, and if you enter thus into it you can but perish, and you have a venture for eternal life, which you have not otherwise, if you wilfully keep at a distance from God and his covenant.

3. It is not absolute perfection of holiness that you are called to promise, but a sincere endeavour, which hath the promise of pardon for our failings, upon our renewed repentance. Psal. ciii.

4. There is also a promise of grace and strength to perform if you be sincere in your covenanting. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. But

5. I would ask any of you, my children, who may be deterred from personal covenanting by the strictness of the obligations of the covenant; or I would have you to ask your own hearts, whether you find fault with the covenant because of its strictness, and are grieved because it is so strict, and if you could have it ordered according to your own desire, whether you could wish it were not so strict; or whether, on the other hand, you rather find fault with yourselves, viz., your own weakness and too wickedness of your own heart, which will not suffer you to be so holy as this

covenant requires? and whether you would rather wish and desire to have grace to be as strictly holy as the covenant requires? If you can but love and approve the covenant in your heart, as to the strictness of it, and if all your censorious hard thoughts be levelled against yourselves, you need not at all be discouraged from covenanting. Your very approving the covenant, as to its strictness of terms, is a good sign that you have already obtained the spirit and grace of the covenant, and consequently shall have grace to be faithful in the fulfilling it.

But if, on the other hand, your heart still rises up against the covenant, as if it were too strict, you have reason to fear you are yet in the gall of bitterness, and are strangers to the spirit and grace of the covenant! and I would entreat you, as in the 3d advice, to be earnest with God by prayer for regenerating grace to change your heart; for if once your heart be truly sanctified, you will no longer judge the covenant too strict, but all your censures will be levelled against your own hearts and lives, as being too wicked and loose. I can assure you, upon the most certain grounds, if the testimony and experience of all true saints, unto which treasure I do, with all my heart, throw my

little mite, if these were the last words I were to utter or write, I say, I can assure you, not one ever yet, who with a true heart made trial of it, ever repented their entering into this covenant because of its strictness, or would so much as wish to be free of it again, unless when under a strong and violent temptation, for which they have sorely repented and grieved. Yea further, I can assuredly tell you, upon the same grounds, that the true believer, who hath by experience known what it is to be thus in covenant with God in Christ, would not change conditions with those who are out of the covenant, though he should have all the treasures of both East and West-Indies, together with the pleasures and honours of the whole universe to boot; yea further, I think I may say, though his eternal estate were not endangered by the exchange, if such a thing may be supposed to be possible, O my dear children, I beseech you for the Lord's sake, hearken to the words of a father, who in tender love and deep concern for your souls, is offering you the best and surest advice he can, delay not to bind and indent yourselves to God in his covenant. Let no lusts nor principle of heart wickedness dissuade; let no doubt nor scruple dis-

courage you from personal covenanting. Go to God and tell him in earnest, that you are resolved to give your consent to be his by his own covenant, come of it what will, whether ever you shall be able to keep it or no; tell him in earnest, that you neither can, dare, nor will content yourselves any longer out of this covenant relation, and if you must perish, you are resolved to perish in the covenant. And if you thus deal with God, and your own souls deliberately and sincerely, and earnestly, my dear children, I dare pledge my soul for yours, that you shall eternally rejoice that ever you were advised and persuaded so to do.

But do not this rashly and inconsiderately, but meditate upon and consider what you are about; wrestle with God, and strive with your own hearts for a heavenly spiritual frame, suitable to such a heavenly transaction; and then in the name of God go about the work. And yet

I would also add this caution, viz., that you delay not the business too long, waiting for such a frame as you think you ought to have; lest Satan make a handle of this to keep you off from your duty, until the thoughts of it by degrees wear out of your minds; but after you have sincerely endeavoured by prayer and meditation to attain

a spiritual heavenly frame, although you cannot attain it in the measure you would be at, yet go and covenant sincerely with that frame you have; and so give up that dead, dull heart of yours to God, and put it into his hand, that he may quicken it and make it better. Who knows but God in his wisdom may forbear to give you a frame, until you have once given yourselves up to him, and then perhaps, before you have quite done with your covenanting work, the Lord may so breathe upon your withered souls, and make you to feel and discern his gracious quickening presence, as a covenanted loving and lovely God, in another sort than you ever dreamed of before? And if he should deal thus with you, or any of you, sure you could not but take this as a bountiful earnest of the heavenly sweetness and happiness of a covenanted state; and so be well pleased with what you have done. But,

If this should fail, yet you must not be discouraged, nor murmur, nor limit the Holy One of Israel; but give him leave to display his grace towards you in what time, season, measure, and manner he pleaseth; only close the bargain sincerely with him, and believingly and patiently wait for the fruit of it; and although sensible spiritual comfort

should be long in coming, yet be not discouraged. If you can find that your covenant transaction hath any influence upon your after victory over a temptation, or a lust, or to fix and confirm your heart, your purpose, and resolution to proceed in the way of duty, you may look upon this, as an excellent fruit of the covenant, nothing inferior in real worth, but rather preferable to the sensible comforts of the Spirit, though not so sweet to your taste.

And further, my dear children, that I may contribute as far as may be to your assistance, in your work of personal covenanting with God, I will here add a brief form of words which may be assisting to you, either as a form, or as a directory, not only how to express, but also how to conceive in your hearts this covenant transaction between God and your souls. When therefore you have, by the assistance of Divine grace, working together with your own diligent endeavour, attained to an heavenly, spiritual frame of heart, and having found a convenient time and place, retired and secret for that purpose, you may give up yourselves to God by covenant in thoughts or words to this purpose:

“Most holy, most righteous, and most gracious

Lord God, I freely confess that I am a poor, miserable, sinful creature, not only by reason of the guilt of sin, both original and actual, but also by reason of the inherent corruption of my nature and wickedness of my heart and inclinations, by reason of which I am utterly unable, as well as unwilling, to do any thing that is good in thy sight; so that thou mightest justly condemn me to everlasting burnings, with devils and other damned souls. But glory to thy name for ever, thou hast gloriously magnified the riches of thy grace, in sending thy dear son Jesus Christ into the world, to purchase pardon of sin and eternal life for such degenerate, rebellious sinners, as I am. Thou also makest a free offer of him and all his purchase, unto me as well as other poor sinners, in the gospel, upon most easy, reasonable, and condescending terms of the new covenant of grace, wherein thou promisest that if I truly repent of my sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, consent with my whole heart sincerely that he may be my Lord and Saviour, and give up myself to him, and to thee through him, to be wholly ruled by him as well as saved by him, that then thou wilt, for his sake, pardon all my sins, accept of me in him, and make over unto me by

an unchangeable covenant, all the benefits which he hath purchased by his mediation and sufferings; as thy holy word doth declare in many places. Yea further, thou givest particular encouragement to all such as are oppressed, burdened, grieved, and broken-hearted for their sins, promising rest to their souls if they will come unto and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. O most gracious God; although I dare not say before thee, who art an heart-searching God, that I am penitent and broken for my sins as I ought to be; yet thou knowest that I am truly grieved for them, and truly long to be saved from the service and bondage, as well as the guilt and punishment of them; that I sincerely desire to be sanctified by thy Spirit, and made holy, as well as glorified and made happy. O Lord, I would freely and with all my heart, close the bargain and covenant of grace in Christ with thee; but I am afraid lest my wicked, deceitful, and inconstant heart prove treacherous and perfidious in thy covenant. But O matchless grace! thou hast also made provision against this so great a discouragement, by informing me in thy word, that thou wilt mend and change my heart, and cause me to be steadfast. O blessed covenant! O matchless grace, the fountain of it!

In the strength of thy grace then, O Father of mercies, I will no longer delay or stand off, but forthwith close the bargain; and profess unto thee; and before thee, with all the sincerity and earnestness that I can attain unto, that I agree and consent to this heavenly covenant, as thou hast ordered and contrived it in all the parts and clauses of it; without limitation or reservation whatsoever; and so I resolve to rely upon thy grace for all things that I can need in time and to eternity. I also resolve in thy strength to cleave unto thee in the way of faith and sincere obedience all my days, depending upon thy Spirit for continual supplies of grace and strength for every duty, and for victory over all my spiritual enemies, especially the corruption and wickedness of my own heart. And I desire to bless thy holy name for evermore, for this covenant of grace so well ordered, and wonderfully contrived for securing the happiness and comfort of poor weak believers; particularly, that it is so unchangeable, that it is not in the believer's power to make it void. And blessed be thy holy name, that thou hast not only made known, and made offer of it to me, but also, by thy preventing powerful grace hast effectually inclined and determined me actually. (and I hope

sincerely) though with much imperfection and carnality of heart, to join and bind myself to thee in this covenant; and I pray, beg, and plead that as thou, of thy free grace, hast enabled me to fulfil the condition of it, by sincerely consenting to it, as I hope I have now done, so thou mayest accomplish and fulfil all thy promises to me contained in this covenant, and then I am sure I shall be effectually enabled by grace to persevere; for this is one of thy promises, and a sweet, rich one it is. Now heavenly Father in Christ, I give up myself wholly unto thee, to be wholly at thy disposal, that thou mayest more and more sanctify me by thy Spirit, that I may serve and glorify thee all my days; that thou mayest order all things concerning me by thy providence, as thou shalt see meet, until at last thou bring me home to thy heavenly habitation."

My dear children, as I said above, you may either use this as a form of covenanting, and as it were your indenture; whereby you give up yourselves unto God; or you may use it only as a directory, to assist you with suitable matter to be made use of and explicitly contained in your personal covenanting, whether in words or writing. For as it is agreeable to the doctrine and precedents of

the Scripture, so it hath been found experimentally to be of great use and advantage to many of God's people, to put their covenant transaction with God in such a form of writing, and to subscribe it with their own hand, as a remaining visible witness of their closing with Christ in the covenant of grace:

I shall here briefly take notice of two or three of the advantages that may naturally flow from this; to the practical Christian :

1. It helps to fix the remembrance of such a spiritual transaction upon the memory, and so drives its influence upon the habitual exercise of the believer's faith, as well as daily practice of holiness.

2. When the believer finds it needful afterwards to renew this transaction; whether at a communion or any other time, his having such an instrument by him is very useful to revive and set to work all his graces and spiritual affections.

3. Such an instrument may be of great use in a time of desertion, despondency, or temptation, to strengthen the believer's faith, and thereby give him victory over his spiritual enemies.

4. And finally, if you would profitably make use of it either as a form or as a directory, it will be needful that you carefully read it over again and

again, that you may have an understanding impression of what is contained in it, upon your minds; and thereby a suitable heavenliness of frame, agreeable to such a transaction, may be not only obtained, but also revived upon suitable occasions.

From what I have said concerning personal covenanting with God, I would not be so understood as if I believe or would insinuate that there is no hope of salvation to those who do not thus explicitly and formally transact with God in a covenant way. God forbid! I hope there are many (even besides infants who are incapable) who have really and virtually accepted of Christ as offered in the gospel, even though their acceptance of him was perhaps never distinctly observed by themselves; which may be when sinners are convicted in hearing of a sermon, by reading a portion of Scripture, or by the effectual application of any proper means for that purpose; but inasmuch as we are reasonable creatures, and God dealth with us as such in the gospel, wherein he requires our assent to the covenant of grace; surely reason may evince, and the nature of the thing, that it is both our duty and advantage to manage a matter of such infinite importance, with

all the deliberation, understanding, distinctness, and explicitness that we are capable of, and can attain unto.

And then in pursuance to your personal covenanting,

5. I exhort and intreat you to embrace, not only the first, but also succeeding opportunities to seal your covenant by coming to the Lord's table; and double your diligence also to be furnished with a suitable frame of heart for such a solemnity. I would not willingly increase this performance to a greater bulk than needful, and therefore I shall forbear to enlarge upon this particular, it being that most of what is said in the former advice may be fitly applied here; this ordinance being only a confirming and sealing of that same covenant which I have been exhorting and directing you to make and enter into with God; and likewise you are likely to have frequent opportunities of receiving suitable instructions for such work at sacramental occasions, which I entreat you to improve conscientiously and in the fear of God; and therefore proceed,

6. To entreat and beseech you, as dear children, with all care and watchfulness, to live and lead a truly pious, godly life in the world, making

conscience of all duties towards God and man as far as possible; remembering that blessed is that man whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. And before I proceed to be more particular, I will here add an argument or two, to strengthen this exhortation.

(1.) Your care thus to live according to your covenant will witness, to your unspeakable comfort, as well as God's glory and joy of all godly beholders, that you were sincere in your covenant-making.

(2.) This is the only way to obtain the blessings of the covenant. And

(3.) It is the only way to enjoy the sweet comforts of a covenanted state, and to render the covenant amiable and lovely, desirable and delightful to you; thus you shall find Christ's yoke to be easy and his burthen light.

(4.) You shall be plentifully rewarded for your faithfulness in your covenant; but if you prove perfidious, your condemnation will be more dreadful than the condemnation of heathens or Indians. Now I proceed to be somewhat particular under the next foregoing general head; and therefore,

7. I intreat and beseech you, live near to God continually in the daily discharge of all holy duties;

particularly secret prayer. O my children, let no day, nor morning nor evening, pass without your minding and performing this duty; the necessity for it is urging, the benefit is very great. I might make use of a great many arguments to press you to this, but I must not swell the bulk of this little design too much. I will therefore only mention these two:

(1.) Unless you make conscience of praying to God on earth, you shall never praise him in heaven.

(2.) If you seek not the blessing of God by prayer, you shall surely be heirs of his curse, and (if this will be of any weight with you) you will at last oblige me, your poor, sinful, earthly father, who am obliged now daily to pray for a blessing upon you from God, to join with our heavenly Father, in giving you my curse also, though you be my own children; and is not this dreadful to think upon? I beseech you, therefore, as you would avoid and escape the curse of both your heavenly and earthly father, neglect not secret prayer.

8. Be not cold and formal in your prayers and other religious duties, but strive to be in earnest in them all; have your whole hearts and souls

engaged and employed in the duties you are called unto, considering that you are worshipping a holy, jealous, heart-searching God, and that you are working for a great prize, even for an eternal kingdom.

9. Labour, I beseech you, to have your souls deeply impressed with a religious regard for the Sabbath day, striving to double your diligence in all religious duties upon that day, and avoiding, all carnal exercises, such as vain and unprofitable, discourse about the world and worldly affairs, idle and carnal mirth and jesting, and in short every thing that may have a tendency to draw away your mind from God, to mar a spiritual frame, or to hinder spiritual exercises; and as much as may be, endeavour to spend the whole day in religious exercises, one after another. Labour also to be in a religious frame throughout the whole day; and in order hereunto, be sure that it be among your petitions to God on the Saturday evening, before you go to rest, that he may give you a religious frame of spirit befitting his own holy day; and watch against everything that may be diverting. Endeavour also to have all your worldly matters so composed the week before the Sabbath come, that they may not be a snare to your souls, by distract-

ing your mind with care about them. Think it not enough that you perform stated duties, public, private, and secret on that day, but remember and believe it, that the great Creator of the world and Redeemer of your souls requires a good, honest, faithful day's work at your hands on that day. Consider who will reap the benefit of your diligence, or suffer by your lazy negligence, in your Sabbath days. Consider further the sweet, spiritual fellowship with God, and spiritual refreshment that may be enjoyed on a well-spent Sabbath; besides the hopes of an eternal Sabbath of rest with God in heaven! And moreover this is the best way to obtain the blessing of God upon your whole week's, yea your whole life's business and employment. Whereas if you neglect the Lord's holy day here upon earth, you may get a curse entailed upon your person and business through your life, and at last be eternally excluded from an endless Sabbath of rest in glory above. I recommend unto your frequent and serious perusal those Scriptures where the Sabbath is pressed and recommended to the people of God for their observation, such as Isa. lvi. and lviii. chapters, Neh. xiii., Jer. xvii., with other places, besides the fourth commandment, which you will meet with in your reading

the Scriptures. In short you may judge of the truth of your grace and goodness on your spiritual estate, by considering your religious regard or sinful disregard of the Lord's holy day. Be sure to abstain from gadding abroad in civil (I may call them profane) visits on that day. This practice proves an occasion of profaning the Sabbath many ways by thought, word, and deed. Therefore if you have not the opportunity of public worship, keep close at home, unless you are in duty called in a way of necessity or mercy, and even then you had need to be upon your watch against profaning the Sabbath by carnal, idle, unprofitable conversation.

10: My dear children, I also beseech you to strive to be spiritually minded, to have your hearts, thoughts, cares, and concerns most upon spiritual things. Labour to accustom yourselves habitually to spend your leisure hours, wherein you are eased from your worldly employments, in such exercises as may be edifying, as reading the Scriptures and other good books. Particularly endeavour by reading, meditation, and discourse, to grow in the knowledge of the principles of the holy Christian religion, that you may be able to serve God with understanding, and to discern

between truth and error in matters of Christian faith. This is especially needful in this age, when dangerous errors do so much abound in the world, and I am afraid, are creeping too much among professors of the true religion. For this purpose I recommend it to you to acquaint yourselves well with our Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, together with Mr. Vincént's explanation of the Shorter Catechism, which in my opinion is the best that I have seen of the kind. Let these things be the matter of your diversion and recreation, when others are taken up with their mirth, songs, and other unprofitable diversions, or even in a lazy, inactive resting of their weary bodies. Something of this discreetly used will at once rest your toiled bodies, and recreate, refresh, restore, and edify your spent spirits and weary minds. Be ready to take notice of any point in religion, especially such as relate to practical, experimental religion, I say, take notice of such particulars as you do not rightly understand, that you may take an opportunity to propose them to some understanding, godly Christian, who may instruct and inform you better about them: but avoid curious, unprofitable questions which tend to puzzle rather than edify. Consider, not only your own

edification, but also the edification of your children and families, if ever you have any, depends upon your growth and increase in knowledge; for how shall you instruct your children in the things concerning the kingdom of God, if you, through laziness, remain unacquainted with them yourselves? I am afraid many parents and children do tumble down blindfolded into hell, for want of knowledge in the parents, who, through their own laziness and negligence, remain ignorant of the great concerns of their souls, and consequently are incapable of giving necessary instructions to their children. Besides, how many are led away with error and delusion, for want of a competent foundation of true Christian knowledge, even where there were means and opportunities to obtain it, through mere laziness to use the means, or being too much taken up with idle company and unprofitable recreations!

11. My next advice to you, my dear children; is to set the glory of God, and your own and others' salvation, before you, as the chief ends of all that you do in the world. Your eating and drinking, your labour and rest, yea, your very pleasure and recreation, should be all ordered so as that they may be a means to promote God's glory and your own salvation. Therefore, accor-

dingly, resolve with yourselves never to put your hands to any thing, but what may bear a due subordination to these ends, and watchfully endeavour to have them in view, or something visibly tending that way, as to every business of moment that you undertake; and be sure you never allow yourselves in any thing, small or great, that is contrary to them. The advantage of this advice well and closely followed, will be exceedingly great. For

(1.) You may warrantably go to God by prayer for his blessing to succeed you in all such undertakings.

(2.) You may, in the name of the great and Almighty Jehovah, set about every thing which you thus propose.

(3.) You may be sure of success so far as will or can consist with either your real advantage or God's glory, for these two never can nor shall be divided, in the concerns of God's children while they pursue these ends.

(4.) Even in the case of a disappointment and frustration of your purpose, it shall be found in the issue to have been brought about for your advantage, though at present it be never so distressing and afflicting; whereas, on the other hand,

though all you do were lawful and duty, and though you were still successful and prosperous in your undertakings; yet, if you aim not at the glory of God and your own salvation as the great end of all, if you do not repent and reform, eternal disappointment shall be your lot.

It is true, it is not possible for you expressly to think of God's glory and your own salvation, at the beginning of every little action or undertaking; but you must watchfully endeavour, (1.) To think very often of these ends as your ends in what you are engaged in. (2.) To propose them in all affairs of moment. (3.) Strive to leave nothing undone that is in your power, that is likely to promote these great ends. And, (4.) You must watchfully guard against every thing that is contrary to them. I will illustrate this matter by this easy similitude; the husbandman's principal end as such, in all his labour, is to provide for his family; it is not necessary for him to think of this end at every little minute part of his work, every new ridge of land that he plows, or every joint of fence which he makes, &c., yet he will be careful to observe the foregoing particulars in prosecuting the work of his husbandry; even so, my dear children, do ye in all ye do. I will close this advice with this

short argument; the more earnestly, and frequently, and industriously you eye God's glory in what you do, the more tenderly will he regard our good, profit and comfort in all things, in time and eternity.

12. I intreat you to keep a strict watch against the sins, lusts, and temptations, that by experience, you observe to prevail most easily against you; whether the advantage which such a sin hath against you; be owing to your temper, condition in the world, your employment, company, or whatever it be. I say, watch against the sin that easily besets you; and this will keep you from innumerable sins more, which would unavoidably follow upon this when yielded to. Keep as far from the occasion of such sins as possibly you can; never cast nor allow yourselves in the way of any temptations when you can avoid it. If Providence bring a temptation upon you, you may hope for strength to resist and overcome it, but if you bring a temptation in your own way, take heed lest it overcome and ensnare you.

13. I beseech you, my dear children, strive to have a tender conscience with respect to sin and duty; that is, let your consciences be kept always so awake and sensible. as to be quickly and easily

wounded and pricked even with small sins, or the neglect of small duties, or those that are so accounted commonly in the world. Let not the smallness of a sin encourage you to commit it, nor the smallness of a duty encourage you to neglect it, lest you find the small sins to bring great guilt along with them. My dear children, you will not find that there is a little or an easy hell wherein to punish these little sins; and besides, one of these little sins presumptuously committed, becomes greater than a great sin committed through the surprise of a strong, sudden, surprising temptation: there are millions of souls now in endless torment; who were never guilty of any sins but such as by the world are reckoned small.

14. In whatever condition or station, you be in the world, be diligent in the pursuit of the business of your state and calling; idleness, laziness; and carelessness are not only great sins in themselves, but also the cause of innumerable more; therefore be industrious, diligent, and frugal improvers of your time, talents, and abilities of both body and mind, for God's glory, and the good of yourselves and others. If you had a kingdom, a province, or a country for an inheritance, and if all the inhabitants thereof were your servants; yet

it would be your indispensable duty frugally and diligently to improve your time and talents for the glory of God who gave them, and the good of the generation you live in; much more, as the case with you now is, and is likely to be in the world, that you must depend upon your industry, care, and diligence, as a means, under God, for your daily bread, like other poor people in the world. Besides, honest industry and diligence in an honest employment, though never so mean, is commendable and honourable in the sight of God and man; whereas carelessness, idleness, and sloth are scandalous and discommendable in the eyes of all, and bring unavoidably a whole train of other sins along with them, as I hinted before. For first, they commonly bring on want; want tempts to sinful shifts; these lead to lying and perjury, to avoid reproach and punishment, Yea, further, idleness and sloth shut up the bowels of compassion in those who are able to relieve; whereas every one will be liberal to the frugal and diligent when they are in want. And finally, those who are idle from their duty and lawful employment, cannot be idle from sin; for man is by nature such an active creature, that he cannot be wholly idle. If he be not employed in what is

good and commendable, he will be employed in vice and sin.

15. Make conscience of the duties of all the relations you are in, or at any time shall be in. Every relation that you are in, calls for a whole train of duties, and all these duties must be accompanied with, and proceed from a principle of true Christian charity or love to the party to whom you are related, suitable to the relation; or else the duty, though materially performed, is not acceptable in the sight of God, nor can the relation be comfortable and agreeable to you.

16. Let humility, mortification, and self-denial be carefully studied and practised by you. This threefold lesson you will find very difficult, by reason of the direct and violent opposition that is between it and the old man, or your corrupt nature; but the necessity is as great as the difficulty. No salvation without it. Rom. viii. 13. Mark viii. 34. No grace, no virtue can be genuine and true, without this threefold companion. You must either be humble and base in your own eyes, or the Almighty will abase, humble, and degrade you to eternity. You must either mortify your lusts, or they will mortify and kill you outright for ever and ever. You must either

deny yourselves, or Christ will deny and reject you at the day of judgment. Let not the difficulty nor irksomeness of the work discourage you; for, if you set about it in good earnest, the omnipotent Spirit will give his assistance, and thereby, make you successful and victorious; and moreover you will find a heavenly pleasure in it that will more than counterbalance all the irksomeness and ungratefulness of it; besides that it is ungrateful only to your corrupt part that must be crucified, but it will be life, health, and pleasure to the inward part, which only is worthy to live.

17. Be cheerfully content with your lot in the world; bring your mind to your condition, and never grudge that you cannot bring your condition to your mind. (1.) Consider, for your help; that whatever afflicting circumstances be in your condition, you deserve infinitely worse for your sins. (2.) That there are many in the world in a worse condition than you. (3.) You may be yet in a worse condition by far than what you are now in. (4.) That whatever apprehensions carnal sense may have of your condition, yet if you belong to God, the condition you are in is the very best that for the present you can be in; that is,

your heavenly Father knows that condition for the present to be most meet for you; and if you belong not to God, viz., by true conversion, you may reckon it a great mercy that you are yet out of hell; and you have more reason to be concerned for your sinful, dangerous state, than for any afflicting circumstance in your worldly concerns. (5.) Your troubles and grievances will soon be over; and perhaps sooner than you are aware of, either by death, or by a turn of divine providence. (6.) Be more in meditating on what is merciful in your lot, in order to thanksgiving; than on what is afflicting, to feed your murmuring, repining humour.

18. Thankfully receive and wisely improve what good things God in his providence gives you to enjoy, guarding against all extremes in the use and enjoyment of them. Neither spend them upon your lusts in a way of prodigality or profuseness, nor withhold more than is meet, in a covetous, penurious manner. Neither despise temporal mercies, nor set your hearts and affections too much upon them; so as to alienate them from God, your chiefest good, but prize and improve them as Divine mercies in their kind, as arguments to persuade you to love God more and

serve him better, as an evidence of your thankfulness for them; and particularly I exhort you, with a cheerful and pious heart to bestow of your substance upon pious and charitable uses, as the Lord shall bless and prosper you in your endeavours. Grudge not what the Lord requires to be given out for the relief of the poor and needy; or for the maintaining or promoting the true interest of religion.

19. Do all the good offices which may lie in your power, to all persons, yet so as not to let one duty interfere with another, but still the lesser give way to the greater; neither let the remembrance of a past injury hinder you to do a present duty; nor endeavour to recompense evil for evil, but rather imitate your Father which is in heaven, by forgiving injuries, rendering good for evil, and blessing for cursing. Yet be wary and wisely cautious of such whom you have just reason to suspect, not being too credulous, lest you foolishly expose yourselves to the wicked, injurious designs of ill-disposed persons, pretending love, and intending mischief. Strive to love and do good to all, even the worst, but trust and confide in none but upon a good rational ground. Gedaliah's too good opinion of Ishmael proved an

inlet to his own murder, which otherwise he might have prevented, Jer. xl. 13, and xli. 1, 2. You had need of the serpent's wisdom as well, as the dove's innocency, especially in this age, when ingenuity and candour are so scarce and rare.

20. In the management of all your actions and concerns with others about the things of this world, I intreat you to study uprightness and equity with great watchfulness and tenderness: Guard against your being biassed in your judgment, in favour of your own interest, by carnal self-love, which too often blinds our eyes, and hinders us clearly to see and impartially to judge in matters wherein we ourselves are in any respect parties concerned. Resolve therefore, with yourselves in the fear of the Lord, never to allow yourselves to say or do any thing in favour of yourselves or your own interest, when it unjustly tends to hurt your neighbour. Let all that you do, wherein any person or persons besides yourselves are concerned, be, as far as possible, regulated by the great law of love, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" which our Lord (Matt. vii. 12) explains with admirable clearness thus, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye, even so to

them." And for your help I would offer these two or three things :

(1.) Think with yourselves how you would judge of such an affair, if you were in your neighbour's place and condition, and he in yours ; how you would or could reasonably expect or desire of him, if your soul were in his soul's stead.

(2.) Let it not suffice to satisfy your conscience that what you do is either justifiable by the law or custom of the country where you dwell, or even by the law of justice in relation to such a matter, unless it be also according to the aforementioned law of love ; that is, unless what you do be consistent with true love and sincere good-will to the person you have to do with ; for you must know that this great law of love obliges us to many things towards our neighbour, which justice itself, abstractly considered, does not oblige us to. I will here give you one Scripture example : when Joseph, the espoused husband of the virgin Mary, discovered that she was with child, and knew not that it was of the Holy Ghost, he was resolved to put her away as the law had provided in that case, Deut. xxiv. 1. Now although, considering the heinousness of the supposed crime, Joseph could not have been in the least censured, as acting

unjustly, if he had, upon supposition of the suspected crime, made her a public example as the law had directed ; yet behold his singular tenderness toward the person, who (as he thought) had so wickedly injured him. He was resolved to put her away privately, and so to expose her as little as he could ; which could proceed from nothing else but an overruling law of love written in his heart, constraining him to abate from a rigorous prosecution, which in justice he might have done ; if matters had been as at first he apprehended ; for his being a just man is given as the reason of his singular lenity towards his (supposed unchaste) spouse. The case of the Samaritan that fell among thieves in the parable, is also, applicable here.

(3.) It might be of use also to regulate your judgment and practice in your dealings and actings with others, and so preserve you from partial bias in favour of your own self-interest, if you would, in any case or business wherein others as well as yourselves are concerned, I say, if you would make the supposition that our Lord Christ were now upon earth, as once he was, and you had an opportunity to ask him how you ought to act in such or such a case, or towards such or such a

neighbour; I say, if you would seriously enquire at yourselves, what most probably he would direct you unto, it might be of use to free your judgment of sinful bias in favour of yourselves to your neighbour's prejudice; for you now have his law and his deputy, viz., your conscience, as informed by his law, to direct you in all cases whatsoever.

(4.) Consider seriously what we are taught in the close of the book of Ecclesiastes, that God will bring everything into judgment, &c. And we may be sure that whatever sin we are guilty of through the influence of any sinful bias, it will be laid open; and further that such errors in our judgment will be so far from excusing us before his tribunal, that they themselves will be found to be sins of a deep dye, being the genuine fruit of sinful self-love. Consider also that our impartial Judge is our daily witness, all our ways are before him, and he pondereth all our goings; and therefore as a conclusion to this advice, let what the wise man suggesteth, Prov. x. 9, be carefully remembered and observed, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely."

21. My dear children, I earnestly obtest you, as you would desire a divine blessing from on

high, upon your persons and concerns, seek counsel from God in all your projects and designs; and strive to be holy and pure in all your motives and intentions. And beware that while you seek God's counsel, you do not take your own instead of his; that is, take heed, lest after you have sought counsel of God by prayer, you yield and hearken to what carnal sense and reason advise, rather than to what is offered from a more heavenly source, or upon more heavenly and pure considerations. Much care and circumspection there is need of here, lest your wicked and deceitful heart delude you, and make you to believe that to be the advice and counsel of God, which is only founded upon consulting with flesh and blood.

Here let me exhort you never to forbear a plain duty because of the difficulty or danger that may seem to attend it, nor to commit a sin or even run the risk of a dangerous temptation for a worldly advantage. How had Lot almost perished in the destruction of Sodom, as a consequence of his associating himself with those reprobates, from worldly considerations! And particularly, my dear children, I beseech you for the Lord's sake, consult not too much with flesh and blood in your making choice of a yoke fellow with whom to live in a

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state of wedlock. Beware, I beseech you, of being determined in your choice, either by that violent, blind, unreasonable thing called love, which so often prevails over young persons, to their greatly endangering of both present and future comfort. Beware also of being principally determined in this choice by the alluring prospects of honour and grandeur, or of riches and the pelf of this world, without due regard to true virtue and piety. I intreat you as you regard your duty to God, your own true comfort in this life; as you regard the happiness of the world to come, after a godly life here in this world; as you regard the duty of Christian parents to their seed and offspring not yet begotten or thought of, let the reasonable appearance of true virtue and piety; together with the reasonable prospect of living together in the fear of God, and in true conjugal peace, love; and concord, be the motives to determine you in your choice of a person with whom to live in a wedlock state. Consider, dear children, it is not for a year or an apprenticeship, but for life and posterity that you make this bargain or contract; your children not yet begotten are concerned in it; their Christian education, in a great measure, depends upon it; and therefore, if in any concern of life

you have need of Divine counsel and conduct, you have need of it in this. And here I will, for your instruction; endeavour to show you how far you may and ought to allow the consideration of a worldly interest to influence your choice; for it should not be wholly left out of our thought in the management of this momentous affair. If there be a rational persuasion of true virtue, and piety in the party proposed to join with, it is needful to consider if there be such a measure of the good things of this world, as may found a rational hope that your lives may be comfortable; and not miserable through pinching straits and wants. Of this if there be a prospect well; and the more liberal the prospect is, the better, and the more reason to be thankful; but if the scarcity of these things be so great on both sides that there is a visible hazard of your condition in the world, its being made worse or more miserable through want than it is likely to be in a single state, I would advise you to forbear; at least for a while, though the party may appear to be truly deserving; for it will be but little comfort to either of you, that by being joined together, and so having your charge increased, the condition of both be made more miserable in this respect than it might have

been apart. But, on the other hand, if the rational certain presumption of virtue and piety be wanting, I entreat you, let not the pelf of this world allure you or determine your choice, lest you be guilty of sacrificing your conscience, peace, yea, and salvation, to the lust of covetousness. Ponder these things well at the first motion, before fancy, conceit; or affection grow too strong; and be earnest with God, by prayer, that he may guide, bound, and regulate your love, and then your love, in order to marriage, will be such as becomes Christians who have already espoused themselves, and given their choicest love to Christ their spiritual Husband in the marriage covenant of grace, and so are unchangeably resolved never to make another marriage that is inconsistent with, or will prove dishonourable to the former, or hinder you to perform any duty to your spiritual Bridegroom:

22. My dear children, I in the last place intreat and beseech you, if it should please the Lord to spare you alive, and by his providence to bring you into a married state, that with full purpose of heart, you apply yourselves to the faithful and diligent discharge of all the various duties that will be incumbent upon you in that relation. I might here enlarge at considerable length, but

that I neither design, nor incline to enlarge this little performance much more than it is already. And therefore briefly:

(1.) Be wisely careful to cherish and cultivate conjugal love with your yoke-fellow in the matrimonial bond; and endeavour by all means to have matters so ordered by and between you, as that you may be mutual helps and comforts to each other in respect of all concerns both spiritual and temporal; let much of your conversation, when together, relate to another world, as becomes those who are fellow-heirs of the same grace of life; and withal carefully and constantly avoiding every thing in your behaviour that may in the least savour of disesteem, contempt, or alienation of heart or affection in any degree.

(2.) As a main part of your work and duty, in that relation, endeavour that your families may be ordered and ruled in the fear of God, particularly by a constant and stated performance of family worship morning and evening; as also, as much as you can, promote and encourage the practice of secret religion by all that shall be under your care, not neglecting the same yourselves. Beware lest the hurry and care of worldly business distract your minds and alienate your hearts from these

things. Beware also of growing lifeless and formal; keep still the first of these exhortations fresh in your minds; endeavour to have both your own hearts, and the hearts of your family set upon God and godliness; and then you may, with a great deal of assurance, depend upon God for his Divine blessing and protection. Be industrious also in the use of all proper means, whereby the knowledge of God and the things of God may grow in your own minds and the minds of those under your care, and discourage all vicious and sinful practices, by animadverting with a prudent severity upon all instances of it in those under your care; remembering, as a spur to these duties, that in a measure you are intrusted with the charge of the souls of all the members of your families, and that you must render an account of your stewardship. And

(3.) If it shall please the Lord to bless you with children, let a tender regard to their souls stir you up to great diligence in all parental duties, especially those which relate to their spiritual edification and future estate. Especially endeavour to get them taught the knowledge of the principles of the Christian faith, and to have them effectually and heartily engaged to the love and practice of holiness in all the parts of it, and to avoid and

hate all sin and vice; that so you may be the happy instruments of their salvation and eternal life, as you were the means in the hand of Providence of their natural life and being. Oh! let not your care and strength be so wholly taken up in providing for their outward man, as to neglect their better part. If you could leave them never so much in the world, yet if through your neglect they should come short of eternal life, it will afford but a very sorrowful reflection. Besides, let the manifold examples of graceless children, their proving a disgrace and reproach to their parents, and a crushing of their spirits in their old age and gray hairs, so alarm you to watchfulness and diligence in these duties, that none of your children may through your negligence prove thus graceless; and then supposing the worst, you will enjoy peace in your own consciences, in so far as you have been conscientious in your duty, though without success. Let also the consideration of the great joy and comfort that aged parents do partake of, as a fruit of their faithful and successful endeavours in teaching their children the fear of the Lord, when they behold them to be loved and esteemed by all good men here, and can rejoice in the hope of seeing them eternally happy in heaven

above; I say, let this consideration animate and quicken your diligence in these things.

My dear children, I shall forbear further to enlarge, and commend you to the Lord and to the word of his grace, which is able to keep you from falling, to guide you through this evil world, and to preserve you safe unto his heavenly kingdom. Esteem these instructions as coming from a dying father; for who knows how soon it may be so? And when this comes to pass, it is a hundred to one if either I be able to give, or you present to receive instructions of this kind; or if you were, you could not possibly retain the twentieth part in order of what I here offer; and therefore, in tender regard and concern for your welfare, I have endeavoured to provide and lay up this little legacy for you before I die; which, if it please the Lord to follow it with his blessing, may afford you more profit and comfort than if I had silver and gold, land and possessions to distribute among you by my last will and testament.

That my God and my father's God, even that God who hath been remarkable to me in a continued series of singular gracious conduct in his providence ever hitherto, and I hope will be my guide unto my dying day; even that God who

hath honoured me to be an office-bearer in his house, (in myself one of the most unworthy that ever he thus called and employed,) that this very God may be also your God by an everlasting and well ordered covenant, is and shall be, my dearly beloved children, my prayer for you while I live.

P. S. If you do not follow your father's advice and counsel in these twenty-two particulars, by a sincere endeavour to put them in practice, beware lest they follow you to the judgment and be a witness against you; and therefore I entreat you that you would desire and hope for your heavenly Father's blessing as well as mine. When these counsels shall come to your hands, be careful to read and peruse them frequently; oblige yourselves by a firm resolution to read, them seriously over, once every month, for some time, until you have the scope and substance of the whole well rooted in your memories; that so you may be able to reduce them to practice upon all suitable occasions. How much will you be to blame, if, after I have been at pains to prepare these counsels for you, you be so slothful and negligent as not to acquaint yourselves with them, in order to practice!