

THE
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Miscellaneous Articles.

“WHO DID HINDER?”

EVERY scriptural conception of the Christian life implies *progress*. All the images under which it is presented convey this idea distinctly. It is involved in the exhortations to believers; it is contemplated in the means of grace; it finds a recognition in the aspirations of the new heart; and it is expressed in the example of eminent Christians.

Religion is divine life in the soul of man. But life in all its forms is progressive. Spiritual life begins in conversion. The young convert, however, is a mere *babe in Christ*. He feels only the first pulsations of the new existence. As yet he has little knowledge or experience. His spiritual life unfolds itself, in a manner analogous to his intellectual life, by the expansion of his views, the strength and maturity of principle, and the right and active exercise of holy affections. Hence the exhortation—“grow in grace”—“desire the sincere walk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” All the means of grace, the word and ordinances of God, with the gracious influences of the Spirit, are intended to promote the growth of believers. Again, the Christian life is a *walk* of faith: of course the steps lead onward. More emphatically, it is a *race* which implies not only progress but effort. In accordance with this image we have the persuasive exhortations of the Apostle: “So run that ye may obtain.” “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark.”

Probably no true Christian is altogether destitute of sympathy

to Huguenot piety. Both at the North and the South, some of the best blood of Protestantism comes from French ancestry.

7. Let us not forget that France assisted America in the achievements of the Revolution. Her army and her navy contributed to the establishment of our Independence; and Lafayette was the friend and ally of Washington. If France has sowed for us carnal things, shall we think it hard to repay her in spiritual?

8. Christian effort for France is one of the forms in which the conversion of Jews and Gentiles can be most effectually accomplished. What a mighty power would be wielded under God in introducing the triumphs of the Millennium, if the resources and influence of the French people were enlisted on the side of the Redeemer?

9. The American Churches are abundantly able to assist the religious movement in France. God has given us great temporal prosperity. The very surplus of our extravagance is wealth; the crumbs from the table of our luxuries would more than supply the wants of one of the noblest Christian Societies in the world.

In concluding these brief reflections, we say, may God bless the Evangelical Society of France, and our beloved brother, Mr. Pilatte, its worthy representative!

"Que la grâce soit avec tous ceux qui aiment notre Seigneur Jésus Christ en pureté!"

Household Thoughts.

A PARENT'S PRIVATE THOUGHTS.

I AM a parent. To guide and encourage my faithfulness, I have a maxim of Divine wisdom which has the nature of a commandment with promise: Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

The way in which a child should go, is the way of obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the only way of true life; the way to heaven. I must lead my child in the way of duty to God and man. My first and chief effort must be to teach him the knowledge and the fear of his Maker, and the power and love of his Saviour.

I have been the instrument of Providence in bringing my child into being, and of giving him a life which is never to end. It remains for me to be either the happy instrument of making his endless life an infinite blessing to himself, or the guilty instrument of making it an infinite curse. Shall I train him for everlasting

sorrow? In other words, shall I provide for him an education without religion?

An irreligious education for an immortal! What is it? Infinitely worse than the education of an ape for a philosopher. I know what there is of apparent good in an education exclusively secular; what temporal advantages it confers; how it opens a fountain of enjoyment nobler and sweeter than mere sensuality; how it raises reason to its just superiority over brutish instinct, and makes a man seem more like a man. But how can it help a sinner who is astray from God; or what avail towards reconciliation, or what plea prepare for the day of judgment; or what anodyne administer for the pains of hell?

It seems to me now, that *if I were not a Christian*, if I were myself an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger to the covenant of promise, I could not bear the thought of being charged with the training of an immortal, for whose virtue and everlasting happiness I should be responsible. In that case my own soul would be under condemnation; and that condemnation would be dreadfully aggravated by unfulfilled obligations to my child. How fearful the case of that parent, who is set to be a light to the path of his child, but walks in darkness himself. The parent, by the common laws of the kingdom of grace, is placed between God and the child. Noah had the charge and the covenant in relation to his children, and in his case the law is given and carried out in form. Had Noah neglected to teach his children the word of God concerning the flood, he could not have taken them with him into the ark, and must have seen them perish with the ungodly. So it was with Abraham; and had not Abraham taught the word of God diligently to his children, he could not have realized the promises that he should be the father of many nations, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed.

How could I be a cold, dark wall of adamant between the Sun of Righteousness and the soul of my child? I could not pray with him. Nor could I lead him to the Holy Book, to show him the words of eternal life. What though I might fill his memory, and drill his thoughts and his tongue with the words of a formal theology, and hold him to his seat while he repeats a catechism, or a Scripture verse, and shut him in from the street and the field on the Sabbath; or take him with me to the sanctuary, where, perhaps, I should be wont myself, in wandering thoughts or sleep, to while away the hour? What would it profit him? I could not tell him, with the words of the heart, that he is a sinner, and that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And what, on such a theme, are words which do not speak the heart? How could I move him by any motion of my own soul, while speaking to him of the love of Christ; how could I surround him with a holy influence; how engage his sympathetic response to that humble and thankful devotion, which might convey from God to him, through me, a subduing and purifying power?

This is the appointed way of the Lord in the ordinary work of his grace. As the elements of vegetable and animal life are carried from their providential source to their place in the living system by air, light, water, and earth, so the elements of spiritual life are ordinarily carried to the heirs and partakers of it by the religious economy of a pious household. There are other means, indeed; but what other means are known to be so uniformly and so widely effectual as this? How, then, must an ungodly parent who thinks of these things be oppressed by his thoughts;—feeling responsibility, but having no heart for his duty; knowing his Lord's will, but being opposed to it in his own. He knows the way of grace in giving the harvest of spiritual life and joy, but has an inward aversion to sowing the seed. He has a burden which he cannot throw off, and which he knows not how to bear. His child must be untaught in the knowledge of his character and destiny, and unimpressed in favour of the gospel of Christ, until the gracious God shall reach him by some means not belonging to his home. He must starve unless he can snatch a crumb of the bread of life from his neighbour's table. Through all those tender months and years, while the nucleus of his character is taking its form, that immortal spirit must lie wholly at the mercy of its own sinful propensities, of an ungodly example in the parent, of the world that lieth in wickedness, and of the adversary who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

With what amazement and despair must a parent who has lived and died in unbelief and unfaithfulness to his children awake to a sense of his responsibility at the last day. If his children escaped the corruption of the world and the wrath to come, it will only aggravate his shame and woe, that their deliverance was in spite of his parental negligence, his bad example, and the forces of wickedness which his faithless guardianship had let in upon them. If they are lost with himself, it will multiply the curse of his own sin to witness for ever the pain of those whom he brought into being, whom he loved as he loved himself, and whom he led down to the gate of that dreadful death. How can such a parent meet the final judgment?

But I am a Christian. I have given myself to the Lord. I have become a citizen of the kingdom of heaven; a member of the household of God. I must take my child along with me. His place is where I am. Of such is the kingdom of heaven. My obligations in this respect are such as the following:

1. I must consider my child as the Lord's, and daily consult the Lord respecting him with that view. I am but the instrument of doing the work of Christ in this thing. And his giving me the parental affections towards the child is kind and wise;—kind, in thus making my parental duty a delight; wise, in thus insuring in some degree the performance of it. But I am the servant of the Lord in it all. The soul for which I labour is his, and I must do my parental duty as unto him.

2. I must make my own Christian endeavours an example for him. The first motions of his rational and moral nature may be swayed by the gentle force of the Christian virtues in his parent. Even the simple, flitting, unuttered thoughts of infancy may be tinged by the rays of Divine love reflected from the parental soul. The smile on my countenance which cheers him, the frown which chides him, the hand which caresses him, may carry the savour of Christian piety to his spiritual sense, may soften the spirit which might otherwise be stubborn, and may win to Christ the heart which might otherwise be alien.

3. I must do my parental work with a conscious dependence on the help of God; as leading my child with one hand, and holding with the other on the throne of grace. God is my strength. I must believe the promise. Its offer of aid implies my dependence; and is only a condescending and delicate hint of my helplessness. The Lord engages his own indispensable interpositions for my success. He insures his rain and sunshine on the field which I sow. He pledges his own constancy towards me as though an intermission of it would be my sure defeat and disappointment. Is not this a humiliating style of encouragement? Yet mortifying only to pride and self-conceit, which are sin and discomfort in themselves, and no security for either diligence or success. Mine is the instrumentality, his the power. I hold in its due position the lens of my conscientious and unwearied faithfulness; he sends his heavenly radiance through it in brilliant, melting convergency on my child. It is a grievous sin against reason and religion in a parent to forget his dependence on the Lord. If a husbandman were inexcusable for infidelity, or forgetfulness of the laws of that Providence which works in his fields to give him his harvest, how much more a parent for despising the laws of that grace which works in his children to bring them salvation!

4. I have, also, as a parent, the privilege of a hearty and unserved reliance. I *can* trust the promise. If Noah could look at the rainbow as a beautiful pledge of the Divine faithfulness, and believe that the earth would never again be destroyed by a flood, I may look at the cross of Christ and the unspeakable gift of the Holy Spirit, and believe that my parental labour shall not be in vain. Is not the mercy of the Lord to me a sign of his gracious purpose towards my child? If I were unbelieving and ungodly in all my thoughts and duties as a parent, I could not cherish any well grounded hope for him. But now the Lord has given me faith in his mercy. He has converted my parental yearnings from the merely natural into the spiritual. All this is a preparation for parental faithfulness. And it is from him. Has he not thus spoken something like a prediction of his gracious work to be done through these regenerate parental affections. I say at evening, it will be fair weather to-morrow, for the sky is red. When the bud swells and opens, and the leaf and the blossom appear, I know that summer is nigh; for the sunbeam which opens the bud is the same

which brings the summer in its time. So while I feel my heart agonizing steadily and deeply towards the salvation of my child and the opening of the life of the Spirit in him, it is surely meet for me to look for the rising of the day-star in his heart. This reliance is a part of the work of that Spirit which gives all our pious tendencies the nature of hope. It is given as a proof of heavenly mercy, and as an instrument of power. It comes as a gift of mercy to make my spirit cheerful and active, and thus, my duty pleasant. For how light and sweet the labour of the husbandman when he sows in high and sure hope. It is an instrument of power; a condition of the Lord's co-operation. Faith, as a grain of mustard seed, was enough to remove the sycamore tree; because faith, however little, makes a man a regular conductor of Divine power. It brings the will of man and the will of God to a unity, makes man and God co-workers, and transforms the natural affections into fruits of the Spirit, by giving them the spiritual quality and direction. By this Divine co-operation, I become the weapon of the Spirit; tempered and burnished according to my faith. I am thus ready for my parental duty, and God is ready with his unfailing help.

5. For further encouragement in my parental piety, I have the assurance that faithfulness in this sphere is the highest of human service, both to church and state. As a servant of the Lord, I must serve my country and the visible church, and in my parental capacity I can serve both most effectually. For the state I have a solemn charge in the education of my child. On what depends the public welfare more than on the right education of children? Even the Grecian republics understood this without Christianity; and some of them took children away from the parents to insure their proper training for the service of the state. But in general this ~~is~~ is left to the parents. I feel my responsibility to make my ~~own~~ blessing to the commonwealth. I shall do it most effectually by bringing him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. No matter to what service my child may be called; whether to the public labours of office, or the humbler and more quiet service of private life; whether to the more exposed employments of providing sustenance and means of improvement, or the more retired occupations of the domestic circle; let the education I provide be in all respects tributary to the public welfare. My family is a part of the state. Let its training be such, that if all were like it, the state would be intelligent, virtuous, and happy.

For the church it is my duty and privilege to raise up a valuable member. What I do wisely for the salvation of my child, I do for the church of God. For this purpose I employ the means of grace. I am the instrument to impart knowledge and the grace of God to an immortal soul. I superintend the work of God in the soul of one of his children. I have a leading hand in forming his character for usefulness and good report in the church; and in preparing one of the stars which are to shine in the crown of the Saviour for ever.

While I say to myself, who is sufficient for these things? I hear the merciful promise, My grace is sufficient for thee.

Unto thee, therefore, O thou, whom my soul desires to serve and honour, do I lift up my eyes, with an humble but unwavering faith in thy promise. That promise is to me and to my child. In reliance upon it, I go to my work of teaching him thy holy word, and of forming his views of duty by thine own example. I lead his thoughts to thy cross. I teach him to pray in thy name. I pray with him and for him, that thy grace may be upon him; that during his earthly life he may adorn thy doctrine, and in heaven behold and enjoy thy glory for ever.

MY SLEEPING CHILDREN.

BY A MOTHER.

[Translated from the German for the Presbyterian Magazine.]

1. ALL is darkness; and life's perturbation
Hushed in midnight now its respite takes.
Stars on high are watching in their station;
Slumber reigns, and yet affection wakes.
2. Love parental here in darkness shaded;
Love parental there its vigil keeps!
Rest my heart! if love by sleep is faded,
Love there is, which slumbers not nor sleeps.
3. Yes, on you, my life's fresh-opened blossoms,
You, my darlings, looks the loving Lord.
Slumber on; angelic care embosoms,
Not in vain with wings of holy guard.
4. Here is Bethel, here the heavenly ladder,
Here God's constant angels come and go;
Guardians, who lest fearful souls grow sadder
Come God's gifts o'er little ones to throw.
5. Feel I not the fanning of their pinions?
Is it ye who calm my restless fear?
Ah, my soul would ask from love's dominions
Greater blessing than an angel near!
6. O descend, a richer boon conveying,
Thou who lov'st the mother and the child,
Thy once-pierced hand in mercy laying
On our heads with benediction mild?
7. Thine they are! by thee they all were given,
On thy bosom place I them again;
Seal them, Father! as the heirs of heaven,
Let them all assured grace obtain.