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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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PARENTAL OBLIGATION.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE N. S. CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,—

In this our Annual Letter we wish to call your attention to Parental Obligation. The importance of this subject, the fear that many christian parents disregard their special duties, and the fact that those who are to be our successors in the Lord's vineyard are amongst those now under parental culture, and that they also require diligent training, justify us in the selection of this subject.

In the Scriptures we find neither precept nor example for the baptism of infants. The Master, therefore, has not required, this, at our hands. Yet the obligations resting on parents are binding, and most clearly defined. Jehovah reveals the secret purposes of heaven to Abraham, because as he declares, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him," and in the New Testament we have the positive command, "And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Such passages teach us that all who have children committed to their care, should train them in the fear of God, and the earliest opportunity should be taken to direct their minds to the claims of religion.—We proceed to point out a few of these religious obligations.

1. Parents should *instruct their children in the Scriptures*. There may be faithful instruction imparted in the Sabbath School, yet this does not free the parent from this special duty. Here the Word of God is explicit. Moses in his last charge to the children of Israel, referring to the statutes and commandments given by Jehovah, says "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." In unison with this, the Psalmist declares that the Lord "established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make known to their children." And it was said by way of congratulation to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation."

If the truths of God's Holy Word are rightly presented, they will not fail to be interesting. This instruction may commence at a very tender age. Beginning with the simplest historical question, the attention is at once arrested, the mind prepared for further inquiry, and the foundation laid for a thorough knowledge of Bible history. The great events in redemption, the principal acts in the life of Christ, the necessity of salvation, and the rewards of eternity may be made subjects of enrapturing interest to the youthful mind.

While this duty is faithfully carried out, the devoted parent will not fail to make special application of those truths, which may be made the means of leading their children to the Saviour. As the Bible is the fountain of all knowledge, we would urge upon parents the great importance of leading those whom they are called to instruct, to this vast reservoir of wisdom. The information the children will thus obtain cannot fail to be an inestimable treasure to them through life, and the results will reach into the future state.

2. Parents should *bring their children under the influence of the Gospel*. The ministry of the Word is the ordained means of bringing souls to Christ. It is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." We fear there are many children of professing Christians who are growing up comparatively ignorant of the Gospel, and living in continual desecration of the Christian Sabbath. The parents go to the house of God, to listen to the message of Life, while the children are left at home to indulge in play, to roam the fields, and to engage in juvenile sports with others whom they may meet. This is a dark picture, but alas, too often seen. It is our settled conviction, that as soon as children are capable of understanding the first principles of religion, that they should, as far as possible, be brought regularly to the sanctuary of God. By this means fixed principles may be established in childhood which will be a bulwark of strength in days to come. The Gospel is often hindered in families by the injudicious conversation of the parents respecting the minister. Though professing to be his sincere friends, and would not wilfully destroy his influence, yet he is made the subject of an unwise criticism at home, objections are raised against the style or subject matter of the last sermon. That discourse, however, has perhaps made a deep impression on the mind of some youthful member of the family. If the thoughtless remark, falling from the lips of the parent, do not entirely remove the serious impressions, the Pastor's usefulness is injured, and a serious hindrance is placed in the way of the conversion of precious souls. Let the Gospel and all in connection therewith be carefully guarded in our families, and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, it will prove "a savour of life unto life, and not of death unto death."

3. Parents should *pray for their children*. By this means, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, there may be

the most perfect consecration of our offspring to the Saviour, and while ordinances of man, when taken as a substitute for the commands of Christ are vain, and sinful, such consecration is acceptable in the sight of God.

Family Prayer has ever been regarded as a duty of the utmost importance, and binding on christian parents. It is sanctioned by the highest authority of the word of God. It commends itself to our most serious consideration, from our entire dependence upon God, by the beneficial influence arising from a right performance of this duty, as well as the judgments threatened against the families that call not upon Jehovah's name. But we would not confine this duty to family prayer. Other occasions will offer if parents are duly impressed with the value of souls committed to their care, in which there will be solemn earnest pleading at the throne of grace, which will be often visited on their behalf. And they will be made individually subjects of special intercession before God. There is a wonderful power in this blessed means of grace, and the line is already long drawn out with names such as Newton, Gough, and others, who appear as living memorials of the power and influence of praying parents.

Finally, Parents should *"walk with God" before their children*. In every department of christian labour there is almost a divine power in holy living. Especially is this seen in the parental relation. It is impossible for parents whose conversation is worldly, who seldom attend the worship of God, whose sabbaths are spent in visiting, who never speak upon the subject of religion, to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." If we would have our children rise up and call us blessed; if when dead we would speak; if we would hear the Master say to us, well done good and faithful servants; and at last to say individually, "behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me;" then we must "walk with God," the service of Christ must be uppermost in our hearts, and we must seek to exemplify the spirit of holiness.

While our children are about us, their characters are being formed for the future of life. Is it not then vastly important that our lives be worthy of imitation? Be assured if we do not save the precious seeds of divine truth in the tender hearts, others will sow the seeds of error, there the fruit of which will be hatred to God, and a total disregard of his claims. We must, therefore, lift high the standard of eternal truth. When labouring faithfully for the salvation of our children, and trusting implicitly in the divine arm, then may we expect the blessing of our heavenly Father upon our efforts.

SPEECH OF REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

Delivered at the recent session of the Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association. In the morning of the same day Mr. S. had preached "a remarkable sermon on 'Christian Enthusiasm.'" This speech was made at a County Mission meeting in the evening of the same day:

The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, who next spoke, was greeted with the heartiest of applause. In reference to a remark of the previous speaker, he said he would not venture to break a lance with that gentleman respecting the excellence of Lancashire, but still he might say that he would have thought more of the county if it had returned Mr. Gladstone to Parliament. (Laughter and loud applause) After conveying to them the brotherly love of the London Baptist Association (of which he happened to be president), he said that much as he disliked public speaking, and little as he was qualified for it—his only point being to preach the Gospel—he would like to say a few practical things to those assembled. If the Association were to prosper, as he sincerely hoped it would, it must be made as far as possible a real and practical thing. They might rest assured that almost all societies that were shams would go to pieces, and if they could show no actual work done by them as a fraternity they would be called to the bar of the public opinion of the Church, weighed in the balance, found wanting, and come to an inglorious end. This was true more and more in the present age, for this age was something like a bull in a crockery shop, turning itself and smashing everything, no matter how beautiful in style, that was breakable. Only that which was eternal and true would remain, on which accounts the work of winning souls would stand the test, if nothing else would. Being founded on the basis of doing practical work for London and its environs, the Association with which he was connected rejoiced in being both strong and powerful. In it they pledged themselves to build at least one chapel every year, and this they had accomplished; in fact, he believed that this year they would have added three churches to the denomination. (Applause.) This practical task was their true source of union; in committee they found it to be the cement of the Association. So also in Lancashire and Cheshire. When they left their useful work they would go to pieces, and deserve to do so. ~~They did their work they would live and be esteemed and supported.~~ One of their objects should be to promote thorough and hearty Christian union among the churches. There was plenty of nominal union, but he feared there was as yet nothing to spare in respect of real heart union among the Christians. Their London Association had been of the greatest imaginable benefit in promoting acquaintance and confidence amongst the brethren, in place of petty

jealousies or disputes, which so often proved on calm examination to be bottomless, simply sufficing to make one wonder how there could be people with minds so little as to make so much of nothing at all. There was no time in these days for pettifogging quarrels. If their friends did not think so much nor so highly of them individually as they thought was proper and justifiable, let them begin to think less of themselves, than, judging by the existence of such an envious feeling, they had done previously. Their growth depended on their adopting to the fullest possible degree an aggressive policy, and in this connection he reminded them that the average of Baptists to the total population was less here than in London. The great mass of the artisans here were not to be led by the nose by squire or priest. Let those be taught the equality, liberty, and fraternity of the Holy Scriptures, for that, depend upon it, was the right weapon to win. There was such a chance for Baptists in this county that one might be inclined to run away from any other district to share in the conflict and he trusted, in the subsequent victory. (Applause.) He thought they should have as extensive a system as possible of modest village stations, those being useful not merely for the primary purpose of conversion, but also in the education of evangelists and preachers. The promising young men of their denomination ought to be allowed fuller opportunities for gathering experience as public speakers. A very excellent plan for the spread of the cause of God was the system of interesting, brief, and earnest Sunday evening services for children, which was now tried pretty generally in London with remarkable success. Plenty of parents would be wonderfully glad so to get rid of their children, and with this beneficial riddance of the children there would be removed one of the excuses which so often were alleged by parents themselves for being absent from public worship. After advocating the more general employment of colporteurs, he urged that apathetic districts should occasionally be roused spiritually by systematic visits from eminent and attractive evangelists, out-door preaching, and any other method of more effectively gaining the attention of the people ought also to be more largely adopted. If the preachers could not get the people together around them by wearing black coats, then let them wear red coats—(laughter)—or do whatever else within the bounds of honesty and morality by which they could win listeners and reach hearts. If the people would not come to the chapels let earnest preachers make their sonorous clamour fill the streets. Let them be, in this respect, humble but zealous imitators of their blessed Master, and preach more in the highways. He went on to advocate the greater use of religious tracts—not common ones—for really the most of them now-a-days might almost be prescribed by physicians as soporifics. (Laughter.) They had too much of the sedative character. In illustration of this he might repeat the story he had heard of a man who was said to have been found in a state of coma through reading a modern tract. (Renewed laughter.) The man had to be rubbed and have brandy and water administered to him. Furthermore, the tract had, it was said, to be carefully removed about half-a-mile distant before the man recovered (a laugh); but he would not vouch for the accuracy of all this. What he recommended was, that they ought to issue tracts upon their own distinctive principles, pointedly written, and they would be certain to be read. It might not be a strange thing for him to say that he became a Baptist, not through anybody explaining to him the doctrine of baptism, but through reading that old standard Baptist work commonly called the New Testament. (Laughter and applause.) But to the present moment it remained a mystery to him how it was that during the fifteen years before he became a Baptist never did a Baptist tract or book cross his track. He did not know how it was that so numerous a body of people conscientiously convinced of the truth that was in them could consent to let their printed testimony be on the whole as if it were not at all—for one faith it was plain enough, but for one baptism it was exceedingly dim. (Applause.) They ought to have plenty of little handbooks and plenty of tracts—if they (the Baptists) were wrong then let them give up the wrong; but if they were right, let them not be ashamed to teach what they held. (Loud applause.) They were first of all Christians with their distinctive views—they rejoiced whenever Christ was preached; they were glad when the Gospel sounded with a silver trumpet to every ear, but let them keep up their testimony of the Gospel by all means, and let them become more and more clearly evangelical. The world needed them as Baptists and Christians, and there were some things they could do that no other denomination would do. He was a sectarian; he was not a believer in the modern Diana of unity which some people cried up so loudly. He believed denominationalism instead of being a blot, was one of the beauties of our Christianity, just as he believed the separate existence of the twelve tribes was by no means any dishonour to Israel, but that they altogether help to swell the patriarchal pomp. (Loud cheers.) If Christians could be fused and moulded into one denomination that night he would not lift up his finger to do it. Never was the world so dark as when there was only form of ecclesiastical organization, and he was afraid that the temptation to be unjust would be quite as great again if some ecclesiastical union could be forced upon us. (Applause.) Besides he was afraid there were truths that would then get into the back ground,