

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 229

MOTHERHOOD

*“For God commanded, saying,
Honour thy father
and mother.”*

Matthew 15:4

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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#229

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THE DIGNITY OF MOTHERHOOD

Jabez Burns (1805-1876)

MOTHER! The name that is associated in every virtuous mind with all that is amiable and delightful. Mother! Most tender, endearing, and expressive of all human appellations!¹ A title employed equally by the royal prince, the sage² philosopher, and the untutored³ peasant—by the savage and the civilized in all nations and through all generations. A relation mercifully founded in the constitution of our nature—universally felt and uniformly acknowledged. And who among all the children of men, except those who in early infancy were bereaved⁴ of their anxious parents, has not happily experienced the inexpressible influence of its charming and delightful power? Who of all the great and the mighty upon the earth does not recognize the unnumbered blessings that he has enjoyed through this endeared relation?

His own infinite wisdom and boundless goodness prompted the almighty Creator to ordain this beneficent⁵ relation, with all its sweet attractions and happy endearments. Must He not, therefore, have made it honorable, noble, and dignified? And [should] its elevation and importance be forgotten and neglected? Surely it demands our most intelligent consideration and devout acknowledgment. But what mind has ever possessed a capacity enlarged and matured to comprehend fully the true dignity of a mother?

Woman was formed by the glorious Creator as a “help meet”⁶ for man (Gen 2:18; *cf.* 1Ti 2:12-14; 1Co 11:8-10). Whatever dignity, therefore, attaches to him as a rational being and the representative on earth of his Maker is shared by the partner of his life—his other self. Woman is the equal participator of all the honors that pertain to human nature. But woman’s highest dignity and her greatest honors are found in contributing to the perfection of the divine purpose of her Creator in her peculiar⁷ character of mother.

A mother’s dignity, however, will but imperfectly appear unless she is considered as bringing into the world a rational⁸ offspring, whose existence will affect others and will continue through eternal ages. Adam, by intuitive wisdom impart-

¹ **appellations** – names; titles.

² **sage** – profoundly wise.

³ **untutored** – uneducated; untaught.

⁴ **bereaved** – deprived of a loved one by death.

⁵ **beneficent** – characterized by doing good.

⁶ **help meet** – helper suitable.

⁷ **peculiar** – special.

⁸ **rational** – endowed with the capacity to reason.

ed from God, perceived this surpassing excellence when “[he] called his wife’s name Eve” because she was “the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20).

Woman must be contemplated as giving birth to those whose principles, characters, and labors will deeply and permanently influence individuals in the domestic circle, which will be felt by large communities and, in some instances at least, by the whole population of the world. Our blessed Lord acknowledges this sentiment,⁹ expressed by the woman respecting Him: when having seen His mighty works and heard His wise discourses, she exclaimed, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps¹⁰ which thou hast sucked” (Luk 11:27). On this rational¹¹ principle, we cannot separate the greatness that distinguished the worthies of ancient and modern times from the characters of their favored mothers. Isaac Watts,¹² Philip Doddridge¹³ ...and many others have immortalized their names by their personal virtues and by their imperishable works to benefit their country. But while we contemplate and enjoy the fruits of their extraordinary labors, we cannot fail to reflect upon the influence of their excellent mothers. We cannot refrain from tendering¹⁴ to them the honor that is their due [because of] their noble endeavor to discharge their maternal obligations, rendering them public blessings.

Divine inspiration has directly sanctioned this principle in the case of the Virgin Mary. Congratulated by her venerable¹⁵ relative Elizabeth, mother by miracle of the herald¹⁶ prophet of Messiah, and filled with the Holy Spirit, Who directed [Mary] to look forward to the future greatness of her mysterious Son, her enlightened and pious¹⁷ mind burst forth in devout admiration at the honor that would be ascribed to her [because of] His unspeakable blessings to mankind. She gave expression to her elevated thoughts and said, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed” (Luk 1:46-48).

Mothers in our time, though not dignified in the manner of the Blessed Virgin and not warranted to anticipate a similar honor to that which attached to her name, may yet contemplate the influence that their children will have upon socie-

⁹ **sentiment** – opinion or view.

¹⁰ **paps** – nipples or breasts of a woman.

¹¹ **rational** – logical.

¹² **Isaac Watts** (1674-1748) – English hymnwriter and theologian; recognized as the “Father of English Hymnody.”

¹³ **Philip Doddridge** (1702-1751) – English Nonconformist leader, author, and hymnwriter.

¹⁴ **tendering** – paying; offering.

¹⁵ **venerable** – worthy of being highly respected because of personal character.

¹⁶ **herald prophet** – messenger proclaiming the approach of someone, i.e., John the Baptist.

¹⁷ **pious** – characterized by showing reverence and obedience to God.

ty; and their own honor will be secured and promoted by laboring to form their infant minds to religion,¹⁸ to virtue, and to love of their country.

Immortality especially gives dignity to its subjects; [from this] arises, in no inconceivable degree, *the exalted honor of a mother*. By the sovereign ordination of the Almighty, she gives birth, not to a being of a mere momentary existence and whose life will perish as that of the beasts of the field, *but to an immortal!* Her sucking infant, feeble and helpless as it may appear, possesses within its bosom a rational soul, an intellectual power, a spirit that all-devouring time cannot destroy—which can *never* die—but which will outlive the splendors of the glorious sun and the burning brilliancy of all the material host of heaven! Throughout the infinite ages of eternity, when all these shall have answered the beneficent¹⁹ end of their creation and shall have been blotted out from their positions in the immense regions of space, the soul of the humblest child will shine and improve before the eternal throne, being filled with holy delight and divine love and ever active in the praises of its blessed Creator.

Likeness to the infinitely glorious Creator constitutes the chief dignity of our nature. And the intelligent, pious mother looks upon her infant offspring²⁰ with adoring gratitude to God, as possessing that likeness. Originally, “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7). By the same omnipotent²¹ and gracious will, God has given being to human souls through all generations as at the first creation; but the mother is honored as the medium of this mysterious creation in the case of every child. And though the moral likeness of its blessed Maker is defaced by the fall of our first parents, still, in thousands of instances, by means of early tuition²² and the prayers of the faithful mother, the child is created in Christ Jesus in righteousness and true holiness (Eph 2:10; 4:24).²³

What, then, can be the greatness, dignity, and honor of her who is the appointed medium of such amazing powers and blessings! Must not mothers feel their high distinctions? Should they not frequently be invited to contemplate them? In this, the security, the prosperity, and the happiness of our country, and even the welfare, the regeneration of the world, are involved. He, therefore, who is most successful in leading their minds to a proper, a rational, and scriptural view of this greatest of earthly relations will most effectually engage, as he will most worthily merit, the gratitude and esteem of dignified, happy, and Christian mothers.

¹⁸ **religion** – biblical Christianity.

¹⁹ **beneficent** – resulting in good.

²⁰ See FGB 224, *Babies*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

²¹ **omnipotent** – all powerful.

²² **tuition** – instruction.

²³ See FGB 202, *The New Birth*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

From *Mothers of the Wise and Good*, Solid Ground Christian Books,
www.solid-ground-books.com.

Jabez Burns (1805-1876): English nonconformist theologian and philosopher; born in Oldham, Lancashire, England.



Woman is the mother of all human beings. She carries human beings in her womb, brings them forth into this world, nourishes them with milk, and takes care of them by bathing them and performing other services. What would kings, princes, prophets, and all the saints be if there had been no Eve? For God does not make human beings from stones: He makes them from man and woman.—*Martin Luther*

Think on this particularly, you that are mothers of children, when you find the fruit of the womb quickened within you: you bear a creature within you of more value than all this visible world—a creature upon whom, from that very moment, an eternity of happiness or misery is entailed. Therefore, it concerns you to travail as in pain for their *souls* before you feel the sorrows and pangs of travail for their *bodies*...O let your cries and prayers for them anticipate your kisses and embraces of them. If you be faithful and successful herein, then happy is the womb that bears them.—*John Flavel*

Any teaching that leads men and women to think of the marriage bond as the sign of bondage and the sacrifice of all independence, to construe wifehood and motherhood as drudgery and interference with woman's higher destiny, any public sentiment to cultivate celibacy as more desirable and honorable or to substitute anything else for marriage and home, not only invades God's ordinance, but opens the door to nameless crimes and threatens the very foundations of society.—A. W. Pink

A MOTHER'S MAIN RESPONSIBILITY

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

IF parents provide not for their children, they are worse than beasts to their young. If they give them not civil education, they are worse than heathens. But if they add not religious education, what do they more than civilized heathens? When God gives thee a child, He says, as Pharaoh's daughter to Moses' mother, "Take this child and nurse it for me" (Exo 2:9). Though we are but parents of their flesh, we must be careful of their souls, otherwise we ruin them.

*Mothers*¹ ought to instruct their children in the principles of religion and to sow the seeds of godliness in their hearts as soon as they are able to speak and have the use of reason (Deu 6:6-7). Such early religious education is a blessed means of grace (1Ki 18:12; compare verse 3). Not only is this the duty of fathers, who should teach their children (Pro 4:3-4), but of mothers, who, while the children are young about their hand, should be dropping something to them for their soul's good. Solomon had not only his father's lesson, but the prophecy his mother taught him (Pro 31:1; 1:8).

They should labor for that end to acquaint them with the Scriptures to cause them to read them (2Ti 3:15). Let the reading of their chapters be a piece of their daily task, and cause them to read the Scriptures in order that they may be acquainted both with the precepts and histories of the Bible. Let them be obliged to learn their catechism; and catechize them yourselves, according to your ability. For teaching by way of question and answer is most easy for them.

If they ask you any questions concerning these things, do not discourage them; but take pains to answer all their questions, however weakly they may be proposed (Deu 6:20-21). Children are often found to have very misshapen notions of divine things; but if they were duly encouraged to speak, they might vent their thoughts, which *mothers* thus get occasion to rectify.

Labor to deter them from sin. The neglect of this was Eli's sin, for which God judged his house (1Sa 3:13). Endeavor to possess their hearts with an abhorrence of sinful practices and a dread of them. Carefully [put a stop to] their lying, swearing, cursing, and Sabbath-breaking. If they learn these while young, they will be fair to accompany them to gray hairs...

Stir them up to the duties of holiness and the practice of religion. Often inculcate on them the doctrine of their sinful, miserable state by nature, and the reme-

¹ EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was originally addressed to parents—fathers and mothers. To emphasize the mother's role, *parent* is sometimes replaced with *mother* in italics.

dy provided in Christ. Shew them the necessity of holiness, pointing out Christ to them as the fountain of sanctification. Commend [Christianity] to them, and press them to the study of it as the main thing they have to do in the world (Pro 4:4).

Pray with them and teach them to pray. For this cause, let not the worship of God be neglected in your families;² but for your children's sake maintain it. No wonder that those children seek not God who never see their *mothers* bow a knee. Ye should take them alone and pray with them and teach them to pray, laying the materials of prayer often before them. Let them learn the Lord's Prayer, and use it as a form until such time as they can conceive a prayer by that directory.³ For though we do not think the Lord has bound us to that form...yet I know none that do affirm that it may not be used as a prayer or as a form, though it is plain it is principally intended for a directory in prayer (Mat 6:9).

Correct [them] (Eph 6:4): The Greek word there signifies both correction and instruction, and so does the English word *nurture*. They must go together, for instruction without correction will hardly succeed. *Mothers* must keep their children in subjection: if they lose their authority over them, the children will be children of Belial indeed, without a yoke, the end of which will be sad (Pro 29:15). They must not only be corrected by reproof, but, when need is, with [the rod] (Pro 19:18). Begin early, as soon as they are capable to be bettered by it; and let your love to them engage you to it and not restrain you (Pro 13:24). As ever ye would keep them out of hell, correct them (Pro 23:13-14).

From "An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, Part 2" in
The Whole Works of Thomas Boston, Vol. 2, Tentmaker Publications,
www.tentmakerpublications.com.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732): Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian; born in Duns, Berwickshire.



² See FGB 188, *Family Worship*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ **directory** – guide.

KEEPERS OF THE SPRINGS

Peter Marshall (1902-1949)

ONCE upon a time, a certain town grew up at the foot of a mountain range. It was sheltered in the lee of the protecting heights, so that the wind that shuddered at the doors and flung handfuls of sleet against the window panes was a wind whose fury was spent. High up in the hills, a strange and quiet forest dweller took it upon himself to be the Keeper of the Springs. He patrolled the hills and wherever he found a spring, he cleaned its brown pool of silt and fallen leaves, of mud and mold, and took away from the spring all foreign matter, so that the water that bubbled up through the sand ran down clean and cold and pure. It leaped sparkling over rocks and dropped joyously in crystal cascades until, swollen by other streams, it became a river of life to the busy town. Millwheels were whirled by its rush. Gardens were refreshed by its waters. Fountains threw it like diamonds into the air. Swans sailed on its limpid surface, and children laughed as they played on its banks in the sunshine.

But the City Council was a group of hard-headed, hard-boiled businessmen. They scanned the civic budget and found in it the salary of a Keeper of the Springs. Said the Keeper of the Purse: "Why should we pay this romance ranger? We never see him; he is not necessary to our town's work life. If we build a reservoir just above the town, we can dispense with his services and save his salary." Therefore, the City Council voted to dispense with the unnecessary cost of a Keeper of the Springs and to build a cement reservoir.

So the Keeper of the Springs no longer visited the brown pools but watched from the heights while they built the reservoir. When it was finished, it soon filled up with water, to be sure; but the water did not seem to be the same. It did not seem to be as clean, and a green scum soon befouled its stagnant surface. There were constant troubles with the delicate machinery of the mills, for it was often clogged with slime, and the swans found another home above the town. At last, an epidemic raged, and the clammy, yellow fingers of sickness reached into every home in every street and lane.

The City Council met again. Sorrowfully, it faced the city's plight; and, frankly, it acknowledged the mistake of the dismissal of the Keeper of the Springs. They sought him out of his hermit hut, high in the hills, and begged him to return to his former joyous labor. Gladly he agreed, and began once more to make his rounds. It was not long until pure water came liltng down under tunnels of ferns and mosses and to sparkle in the cleansed reservoir. Millwheels turned again as of

old. Stenches disappeared. Sickness waned and convalescent children playing in the sun laughed again because the swans had come back.

Do not think me fanciful, too imaginative, or too extravagant in my language when I say that I think of women, and particularly of our mothers, as Keepers of the Springs. The phrase, while poetic, is true and descriptive. We feel its warmth, its softening influence, and however forgetful we have been, however much we have taken for granted life's precious gifts, we are conscious of wistful¹ memories that surge out of the past—the sweet, tender, poignant fragrances of love. Nothing that has been said, nothing that could be said, or that ever will be said would be eloquent enough, expressive enough, or adequate to make articulate² that peculiar emotion we feel to our mothers. So I shall make my tribute a plea for Keepers of the Springs, who will be faithful to their tasks.

There never has been a time when there was a greater need for Keepers of the Springs, or when there were more polluted springs to be cleansed. If the home fails, the country is doomed. The breakdown of homelife and influence will mark the breakdown of the nation. If the Keepers of the Springs desert their posts or are unfaithful to their responsibilities, the future outlook of this country is black indeed. This generation needs Keepers of the Springs who will be courageous enough to cleanse the springs that have been polluted. It is not an easy task—nor is it a popular one; but it must be done for the sake of the children, and the young women of today must do it.

The emancipation³ of womanhood began with Christianity, and it ends with Christianity. It had its beginning one night nineteen hundred years ago when there came to a woman named Mary a vision and a message from heaven (Luk 1:26-38). She saw the rifted clouds of glory and the hidden battlements of heaven. She heard an angelic annunciation of the almost incredible news that she, of all the women on earth—*of all the Marys in history*—was to be the only one who should ever wear entwined the red rose of maternity and the white rose of virginity. It was told her...that she should be the mother of the Savior of the world.

It was nineteen hundred years ago “when Jesus Himself a baby deigned⁴ to be and bathed in baby tears His deity,” and on that night, when that tiny Child lay in the straw of Bethlehem, began the emancipation of womanhood. When He grew up and began to teach the way of life, He ushered woman into a new place in human relations. He accorded her a new dignity and crowned her with a new glory,

¹ **wistful** – thinking sadly about something in the past that you can no longer have.

² **make articulate** – express one's thoughts clearly.

³ **emancipation** – set free from social restrictions; liberation.

⁴ **deigned** – thought it fit to do something.

so that wherever the Christian evangel⁵ has gone for nineteen centuries, the daughters of Mary have been respected, revered, remembered, and loved; for men have recognized that womanhood is a sacred and a noble thing, that women are of finer clay...It remained for the twentieth century, in the name of progress, in the name of tolerance, in the name of broadmindedness, in the name of freedom, to pull her down from her throne and try to make her like a man. She wanted equality...and so it is, that in the name of broadminded tolerance, a man's vices have now become a woman's.

Twentieth-century tolerance has won for woman the right to become intoxicated, the right to have an alcoholic breath, the right to smoke, to work like a man, to act like a man—for is she not man's equal? Today they call it “progress”...but tomorrow, oh, you Keepers of the Springs, they must be made to see that it is not progress. No nation has ever made any progress in a downward direction. No people ever became great by lowering their standards. No people ever became good by adopting a looser morality. It is not progress when the moral tone is lower than it was. It is not progress when purity is not as sweet. It is not progress when womanhood has lost its fragrance. Whatever else it is, it is not progress!

We need Keepers of the Springs who will realize *that what is socially correct may not be morally right*...This generation has seen an entirely new type of womanhood emerge from the bewildering confusion of our time. We have in the United States today a higher standard of living than in any other country or at any other time in the world's history. We have more automobiles, more picture shows, more telephones, more money, more swing bands, more radios, more television sets, more nightclubs, more crime, and more divorce than any other nation in the world. Modern mothers want their children to enjoy the advantages of this new day. They want them, if possible, to have a college diploma to hang on their bedroom wall, and what many of them regard as equally important—a bid to a fraternity or a sorority. They are desperately anxious that their daughters will be popular, although the price of this popularity may not be considered until it is too late. In short, they want their children to succeed, but the usual definition of success, in keeping with the trend of our day, is largely materialistic.

The result of all this is that the modern child is brought up in a decent, cultured, comfortable, but thoroughly irreligious home. All around us, living in the very shadow of our large churches and beautiful cathedrals, children are growing up without a particle of [Christian] training or influence. The parents of such children have usually completely given up the search for religious moorings. At first, they probably had some sort of vague idealism as to what their children

⁵ **evangel** – Christian gospel; the good news of the pardon of sin and the gift of eternal life through repentance of sin, coupled with faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ; see *God's Gospel of Grace* available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

should be taught. They recall something of the religious instruction received when they were children, and they feel that something like that ought to be passed on to the children today; but they can't do it because the simple truth is that they have nothing to give. Our modern broadmindedness has taken religious education out of the day schools. Our modern way of living and our modern irreligion have taken it out of the homes.

As you think of your own mother, remembering her with love and gratitude—in wishful yearning or lonely longing, I am quite sure that the memories that warm and soften your heart are not at all like the memories the children of today will have...For you are, no doubt, remembering the smell of fresh starch in your mother's apron or the smell of a newly ironed blouse, the smell of newly baked bread, the fragrance of the violets she had pinned on her breast. It would be such a pity if all that one could remember would be the aroma of toasted tobacco or nicotine and the odor of beer on the breath!

The challenge of [modern day] motherhood is as old as motherhood itself. Although the average American mother has advantages that pioneer women never knew—material advantages: education, culture, advances made by science and medicine; although the modern mother knows a great deal more about sterilization, diets, health, calories, germs, drugs, medicines, and vitamins than her mother did, there is one subject about which she does not know as much—and that is God.

The modern challenge to motherhood is the eternal challenge—*that of being a godly woman*. The very phrase sounds strange in our ears. We never hear it now. We hear about every other kind of women—beautiful women, smart women, sophisticated women, career women, talented women, divorced women, but so seldom do we hear of a *godly woman*⁶ or of a godly man either, for that matter.

I believe women come nearer fulfilling their God-given function in the home than anywhere else (Ti 2:3-5; 1Ti 5:14; Pro 7:10-11). It is a much nobler thing to be a good wife than to be Miss America. It is a greater achievement to establish a Christian home than it is to produce a second-rate novel filled with filth...The world has enough women who know how to hold their cocktails, who have lost all their illusions and their faith. The world has enough women who know how to be smart. It needs women who are willing to be simple. The world has enough women who know how to be brilliant. It needs some who will be brave. The world has enough women who are popular. It needs more who are *pure*. We need women, and men, too, who would rather be [biblically] right than socially correct.

Let us not fool ourselves—without Christianity, without Christian education, without the principles of Christ inculcated into young life, *we are simply rearing*

⁶ See FGB 196, *Virtuous Womanhood*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

pagans.⁷ Physically, they will be perfect. Intellectually, they will be brilliant. But spiritually, they will be pagan. Let us not fool ourselves. The school is making no attempt to teach the principles of Christ. The Church alone cannot do it. They can never be taught to a child unless *the mother*⁸ *herself knows them and practices them every day*. If you have no prayer life yourself, it is rather a useless gesture to make your child say his prayers every night. If you never enter a church it is rather futile to send your child to Sunday School. If you make a practice of telling social lies, it will be difficult to teach your child to be truthful. If you say cutting things about your neighbors and about fellow members in the church, it will be hard for your child to learn the meaning of kindness...

A minister tells of going to a hospital to visit a mother whose first child had been born. She was a distinctly modern girl. Her home was about average for young married people. "When I came into the room she was propped up in bed writing. 'Come in,' she said, smiling. 'I'm in the midst of housecleaning, and I want your help.' I had never heard of a woman housecleaning while in a hospital bed. Her smile was contagious—she seemed to have found a new and jolly idea. 'I've had a wonderful chance to think here,' she began, 'and it may help me to get things straightened out in my mind if I can talk to you.' She put down her pencil and pad and folded her hands. Then she took a long breath and started: 'Ever since I was a little girl, I hated any sort of restraint. I always wanted to be free. When I finished high school, I took a business course and got a job—not because I needed the money—but because I wanted to be on my own. Before Joe and I were married, we used to say that we would not be slaves to each other. And after we married, our apartment became headquarters for a crowd just like us. We weren't really bad—but we did just what we pleased.' She stopped for a minute and smiled ruefully. 'God didn't mean much to us—we ignored Him. None of us wanted children—or we thought we didn't. And when I knew I was going to have a baby, I was afraid.' She stopped again and looked puzzled. 'Isn't it funny, the things you used to think?' She had almost forgotten I was there—she was speaking to the old girl she had been before her great adventure. Then remembering me suddenly, she went on: 'Where was I? Oh, yes, well, things are different now. I'm not free anymore, and I don't want to be. And the first thing I must do is to clean house.' Here she picked up the sheet of paper lying on the counterpane. 'That's my housecleaning list. You see, when I take Betty home from the hospital with me, our apartment will be *her* home—not just mine and Joe's. And it isn't fit for her now. Certain things will have to go—for Betty's sake. And I've got to houseclean my heart and mind. I'm not just myself: I'm Betty's mother. And that means

⁷ See FGB 204, *Biblical Parenthood*, and FGB 208, *Duties of Children*.

⁸ See FGB 188, *Family Worship*, and FGB 228, *Fatherhood*.

I need God. I can't do my job without Him. Won't you pray for Betty and me and Joe, and for our new home?

“And I saw in her all the mothers of today—mothers in tiny apartments and on lonely farms. Mothers in great houses and in suburban cottages, who are meeting the age-old challenge: that of bringing up their children to the love and knowledge of God. And I seemed to see our Savior with His arms full of children in far-away Judea saying to that mother and to all mothers the old invitation so much needed in these times: ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God’ (Mar 10:14).”

From *Keepers of the Springs*, widely available on the Internet.

Peter Marshall (1902-1949): Scottish-American Presbyterian preacher; twice appointed Chaplain of the U. S. Senate; born in Coatbridge, Scotland.



BIBLICALLY TRAINING CHILDREN 1

James Cameron (1809-1873)

Train up a child in the way he should go.—Proverbs 22:6

THESSE are the words of the wise man, who spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost (2Pe 1:21). They are to be viewed, therefore, not as the admonition of a fellow-creature, but as the authoritative injunction of the God of heaven—the Governor of the universe. Christian mothers! This injunction is addressed to you...Suffer me now to address you respecting your duty:

If you would train up your children in the way they should go, it is necessary that you *cultivate a deep and abiding sense of your own insufficiency*. I need say nothing, I am persuaded, to convince you of the fact of your insufficiency. If you have seriously reflected on the *magnitude* of your responsibility, you are ready to ask, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2Co 2:16). Your work is to train immortal beings for God—the same work, in substance, as that for which the Christian ministry has been instituted. And in reference to this work, even the apostle of the Gentiles said, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves” (2Co 3:5). You are partakers of the same sinful nature with those whom you have to train, encompassed with all the weakness of fallen humanity, and subject to all its temptations. You have to contend against your own sinful propensities;¹ to watch over your own spirits; to strive with your own waywardness; and in the midst of all this, to set before your children such an example of patience, forbearance, and holy living, as shall be a true and faithful comment on the sacred truths you teach them. If ever you become self-sufficient, be assured you will labor in vain; “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6).

But why do I urge upon you the consideration of your insufficiency? Is it to sink you into despair? Nay, verily; that would be a profitless, as well as a cheerless undertaking. It is to induce you, in utter hopelessness of accomplishing the desired result by your own wisdom or strength, to cast yourselves on the God of all wisdom and of all strength, for it is written, “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee” (Psa 55:22); and, “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa 40:29-31). You can have no

¹ **propensities** – tendencies or inclinations to certain kinds of behavior.

fitness *for* your work and no success *in* your work, but what comes from God. You cannot expect that God will grant this fitness and this success, unless you look to Him alone for them. But such is the natural unwillingness of the human heart to turn to God and to trust only in Him that it is not until we are driven from every other refuge and deprived of every other stay² that we cling to Him with the simple childlike dependence of those who have truly learned that there is no other God besides Jehovah; that all power, all wisdom, and all blessings are from Him; and that without Him, every effort must be vain and every undertaking abortive. The [doctrine of the] absolute helplessness and moral impotency of fallen man is one of the most important lessons we can be taught. But alas! It is one of the most difficult for proud human nature to learn. The Spirit of God can teach it; and blessed are they who, being taught by the divine Spirit their own utter helplessness, are taught at the same time that they have a God to go to Who can furnish them richly with all they need.

Again, then, I repeat, cultivate a sense of your insufficiency for the great work to which God has called you; and let this be so thoroughly interwoven in the very texture of your minds—let it so thoroughly pervade your whole habits of thinking and feeling—that you shall be kept in the very lowest depths of self-distrust, feeling that your only safety is in clinging, as with a death-grasp, to the soul-sustaining declaration, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2Co 12:9). It is only when a deep sense of insufficiency and a strong confidence in God are combined that you are at all likely to be successful in your arduous³ work. Your sense of insufficiency will make you cautious, tender, watchful, prayerful; and your confidence in God will nerve your soul and strengthen you to grapple with the difficulties you have to encounter.

If you would train up your children in the way they should go, it is necessary that you *diligently cultivate your own minds, imbuing⁴ them with sound principles and storing them with useful knowledge.* It may be said that this ought to have been done before you occupied the position you do—and it is true. But it will be acknowledged, we think, by almost all who are capable of forming a judgment on the subject, that generally speaking, it is not done before and that in nine-tenths, perhaps, of those cases in which the mind has been fitted for the efficient discharge of a mother’s duties, its cultivation has been chiefly, if not entirely, effected at a period subsequent to that allotted to what is termed *education.*

The education that females generally receive in youth is but ill-fitted for enabling them rightly “to mold the mass of human mind.” Education properly so called is the training of the intellect, the conscience, and the affections. But is this

² **stay** – support; something upon which someone relies.

³ **arduous** – difficult to accomplish; difficult and tiring.

⁴ **imbuing** – filling.

a description of female education as it actually is, even with all the boasted improvements of modern times? Is that education in any prominent degree, the education of the mind or heart at all—in *any form*? Alas! It is too frequently the cultivation of *manner* only. The useful is sacrificed to the ornamental. The casket is embellished with all kinds of tinsel-work, which may attract the admiration of the beholder, while the invaluable jewel it contains is left to comparative neglect. Let it not be supposed that we undervalue accomplishments. We believe them to be highly valuable—much more valuable than many who eagerly pursue them seem to be aware...And assuredly they are too dearly purchased whenever they so engross the time and attention as to leave little or no opportunity *for the cultivation of the mind itself*.

It is distressing to think that while so much depends on the training of the female mind, so little provision is made for that training being effective. Napoleon⁵ once asked Madame Campan⁶ what the French nation most needed in order that her youth might be properly educated. Her reply was comprised in one word: that word was—“Mothers!” And it was a wise reply. Not the French nation only—the *world* needs mothers—Christian, intelligent, well-trained mothers to whom the destinies of the rising generation may safely be entrusted.

A distinguished philosopher has remarked that all the world is but the pupil and disciple of female influence! How important, then, that females should be fitted for their work! And is the education they generally receive in youth such as is likely to fit them for that work? No one acquainted with the subject will reply in the affirmative. The end desired seems rather that they should be qualified for securing admiration and applause, than for molding the minds and forming the characters of those who are to be the future defenders of the faith—the ministers of the Gospel, the philosophers, the legislators of the next generation. I [think] that I cannot do better than present you with the remarks of one of your own sex on this subject—one who is well-entitled to an attentive hearing—I mean the author of *Woman’s Mission*:⁷

“What, then, is the true object of female education? The best answer to this question is a statement of future duties; for it must never be forgotten that if education is not training for future duties, it is nothing. The ordinary lot of woman is to marry. Has anything in these educations prepared her to make a wise choice in marriage? To be a mother? Have the duties of maternity—the *nature of moral influence*—been pointed out to her? Has she ever been enlightened as to the consequent unspeakable importance of personal character *as the source of influence*? In

⁵ **Napoleon Bonaparte** (1769-1820) – French general who became emperor of France.

⁶ **Madame Jeanne Louise Henriette Genet Campan** (1752-1822) – a French educator and a lady-in-waiting for Marie Antoinette.

⁷ Sarah Lewis, *Woman’s Mission* (London: John W. Parker, West Strand; 1839).

a word, have any means, direct or indirect, prepared her for her duties? No! But she is a linguist, a pianist—graceful, admired. What is *that* to the purpose?...The time when young women enter upon life is the one point to which all plans of education tend and at which they all terminate; and *to prepare them for that point is the object of their training*. Is it not cruel to lay up for them a store of future wretchedness by an education that has no period in view but one—a very short one, and the most unimportant and irresponsible of the whole life? Who that had the power of choice would choose to buy *the admiration of the world for a few short years* with the happiness of a whole life?...”⁸

I have a double object in view in directing your attention so prominently to this point: that you may bring these sentiments to bear on the education of your *daughters* and that you may feel the necessity, whatever may have been the nature and extent of your own previous education, of continuing diligently to educate yourselves and add to your resources. You will find that there is need of all, for you have a great work given you to do. Especially, let the sacred truths of God’s Word be the subject of your constant study. Be not content with a superficial knowledge of the great things of God’s Law, but seek to know them in all their depth and fullness, tracing their bearings and connections, studying their harmonies and proportions that thus, by having the Word of Christ dwelling in you richly in all wisdom (Col 3:16), you may be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:17)...But though the Word of God must be your *chief* study, beware of supposing it must be your *only* study. All truth is *from* God, and all truth may be made subservient to the great work of training your children *for* God...

In all your conduct, manifest the most undeviating⁹ consistency...Children, even at a very early age, are eagle-eyed to observe the inconsistencies of a parent. And the slightest inconsistency, though it is manifested only in a word or a look, lowers your influence over them in an inconceivable degree. When a child learns to distrust its mother, all her warnings, admonitions, and remonstrances¹⁰—however earnest and unremitting—fall powerless. This is the chief reason, it is to be feared, why we so frequently see the children of pious parents grow up impenitent.¹¹ The example of their parents has not been uniformly consistent with their instructions and therefore have these instructions been useless...Mothers! Watch your conduct. Your children watch it. Every expression of your countenance—every word you utter—every action they see you perform is scanned and scrutinized by them. If they perceive that you act inconsistently, they will in their

⁸ Lewis, *Mission*, 66-68.

⁹ **undeviating** – steady; not turning or changing.

¹⁰ **remonstrances** – protests.

¹¹ **impenitent** – not feeling shame or regret about one’s actions or attitudes; not repentant.

hearts despise you. And you cannot long deceive a child with regard to character; the only sure way to appear consistent is to be so.

Be firm and unbending in the exercise of your authority, requiring on all occasions implicit, unresisting obedience. Implicit submission to the authority of God is *essential* to true [Christianity]. And God has given you absolute authority over your child, so that by being habituated¹² to the exercise of implicit submission¹³ to your will, he may be trained to the exercise of implicit submission to His. Until your child is able in some measure to judge for himself, you are to him in the place of God; and if you allow your will to be disputed—if you shrink from the exercise of absolute, uncompromising authority—you train your child to be a rebel against God. A mother's indulgence lays the foundation for disobedience and insubordination toward God; which, unless divine grace in future years prevents, must issue in the child's eternal ruin...Let it not be said that the principle we inculcate is severe. It is not so. The most unbending authority may be blended with *the most unwearied love*. And the two ought ever to be blended. These are the two great principles of God's government, and your family government should resemble His. The unwearied exercise of love will prevent your authority from degenerating into harshness—the unbending exercise of authority will prevent your love from degenerating into foolish indulgence.

If you would train up your children in the way they should go, you must restrain and curb their wayward propensities. Never forget that they possess a depraved nature, prone to all evil, averse from all good. Beware, therefore, of allowing them to have their own way. That is the way that leadeth to death (Pro 14:12; 16:25). Accustom them by times to submit to restraint. Subject them to wholesome discipline; and do this in such a manner as shall prove even to them that it is done not for the gratification of your passion, but for their profit. A child left to his own way will bring ruin on himself and sorrow and disgrace on his parents. Remember the case of Adonijah. "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" (1Ki 1:6). In other words, he was a spoiled child. And what was the consequence? His father's dying bed was disturbed by his treasonable machinations;¹⁴ and in order to secure the peace of the kingdom, his own brother was obliged to issue an order for his death.

If you would train your children in the way they should go, you must make all their training bear, directly or indirectly, on their spiritual and eternal well-being. By this, I do not mean that you should be always speaking to them *about* religion, for there is such a thing as forming in the mind of a child a permanent association between religious truth and the feeling of weariness or disgust; and against this evil, par-

¹² **habituated** – accustomed to; used to.

¹³ **implicit submission** – submitting to without question.

¹⁴ **treasonable machinations** – secret and complicated plans of betrayal.

ents should especially guard. I mean that you should yourself always keep in view their eternal interests. It is not merely for the employment of the few fleeting years of the present life that you are training them: it is for the service and enjoyment of God forever. Oh! What a noble work is yours! Contemplate it in the light of eternity, and you will feel that it is the most dignified—the most glorious employment in which an immortal being can engage. The thought that it is for eternity will sustain you amidst every difficulty and cheer you on in your noble career. Yes, it is a noble career! For when all the honor, pomp, and glare of mere temporal pursuits have passed away, the effects of your work shall remain; and ceaseless ages shall record the triumph of your faith, fortitude, and patience... You train your children for eternity. Ought you not, then, to exercise unceasing care and vigilance?

It is surely scarcely necessary for me to add, as my last observation, that if you would train up your children in the way they should go, *you must abound in prayer—fervent, wrestling, believing prayer*.¹⁵ Without this, you can do nothing as it ought to be done. Great and arduous are your duties, and great is the preparation you need for the discharge of them. You need wisdom; you need firmness; you need decision; you need patience; you need self-control; you need perseverance; and whither can you go for these but to the mercy-seat of Him “that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not” (Jam 1:5). “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (Jam 1:17). Continual prayer will fit you for your duties and make these duties pleasant. By prayer, you will lay hold on the strength of God and be able to say with the apostle, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:13).

I close these remarks by reminding you once more of the magnitude of your responsibility. To you (under God) are entrusted the destinies of the rising generation, and through it, the destinies of the generations following. The world looks to you; the Church of God looks to you; the spirits of departed saints look to you; the angelic hosts look to you; God Himself looks to you, as those whose influence shall tell forever on thousands yet unborn. Let a sense of the importance of your high calling animate you to run with patience the race that is set before you; and when you have finished your course, and are called to give in your account, yours will be the unspeakable happiness of being welcomed to the realms of glory by the approving voice of your Savior God: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat 25:21). And with all your loved ones around you, you will stand on the Mount Zion when earth and seas have fled, and with a heart overflowing with gratitude, will cast your crowns at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psa 115:1).

¹⁵ See FGB 221, *Vital Prayer*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

From *Three Lectures to Christian Mothers*, in the public domain.

James Cameron (1809-1873): Scottish Congregational minister; born in Gourock, Firth of Clyde, Scotland.



BIBLICALLY TRAINING CHILDREN 2

John Angell James (1785-1859)

ONE of the greatest mistakes into which mothers fall is that of supposing that the first two or three years of a child's life are unimportant as regards his training. The truth is that in the formation of character they are the most important of all. It has been truly said that from the impressions made, the principles implanted, and the habits formed during these years, the child's character for time and eternity may take its complexion.¹

It is perfectly clear that a child, before he can speak, is susceptible of² moral training. The conscience, or moral sense, may by a judicious woman be developed soon after, if not before, the child has spent his first birthday. So early may he be made to distinguish between what his mother considers right and wrong, between what will please and what will displease her. Why, the brute creatures will do this; and if they can be taught this, may not very young children? It is admitted that there is more of reason in many brutes than in very young children. Still, even very young animals may be trained to know what they may and may not do; and so may very young children. I often hear mothers say that their children are too young to be taught obedience. The mother who acts upon the maxim that children may have their own way for a certain number of years, or even months, will find to her cost that that lesson at least will not speedily be forgotten. Moral training may and should precede that which is intellectual. The cultivation of the affections and conscience should be the commencement and foundation of education and will facilitate every succeeding effort whether of the child or of those who train or teach him.

There is in some women a timidity and a distrust of their own capacity, which paralyze or prevent the endeavors that they could make, if they would only believe in their own power. Every woman of good, plain understanding can do more than she imagines for the formation of her children's character. What she is deficient in, let her supply by reading; and no mother, however qualified, should neglect this. Everyone may learn something from others. Fearful, timid, and anxious mothers, be not afraid! Prayer will bring God's help and God's blessing.

Injudicious indulgence³ is the most common (as it is the most injurious) danger into which a young mother can fall. Be kind; you ought to be. An unloving, hard-hearted mother is a double [slander] upon her sex and her relationship. Love is her power,

¹ **complexion** – habit of mind; temperament.

² **susceptible of** – capable of receiving.

³ **injudicious indulgence** – unwise leniency and pampering.

her instrument, and...she can do nothing—*worse than nothing*—without it. But then her love must be like that of the divine Parent Who said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev 3:19). Can you say “No” to a child when, with winning smiles, beseeching voice, or weeping eyes, he asks for what it is not good that he should receive? Can you take from him that which is likely to be injurious to him, but which it will give him pain to surrender? Can you correct him for his faults when your heart rises up in opposition to your judgment? Can you put him off from your arms at a proper season for so doing, when he clings to your neck and cries to remain? Can you exact obedience in what is to him a difficult, but to you a necessary, command? Can you stand out against his tears, resolute in purpose, unyielding in demand, and first conquer your own heart, so stoutly resisting you, in order to conquer his? Or do you allow yourself to be subdued to put an end to the contest, and by soothing his sufferings foster the temper that ought to be eradicated at any pains and any cost? She who cannot answer all this in the affirmative is not fit to be a mother. There must be discipline in a family. A parent must be obeyed. Give this up, and you train your children for evil and not for good. Here again I say, *begin early*. Put on the soft and easy yoke quickly...Both the human species and animals soon grow beyond the power of discipline...

Need I say to you that all you do in training up your children in the way they should go will bear directly or indirectly on their eternal welfare?...You will not overlook, as I have already remarked, the intellectual training of your children’s minds; but their moral and religious education will, I hope, be your chief object of solicitude.⁴ Viewing your children as immortal beings destined to eternity and capable of the enjoyments of heaven, you will labor even from infancy to imbue⁵ their minds with [biblically Christian] ideas. It is immortality that rescues from littleness and insignificance all that it appertains to and hence arises in no inconsiderable degree the exalted honor of a mother.

She has given birth, by the sovereign ordination of the Almighty, not to a being of a mere momentary existence, whose life will perish like that of the beast of the field, but to an immortal!...Mothers, *such* is your dignity, *such* your exalted honor. Feel and value your rich distinction in being called to educate the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty and to prepare the holy family who are to dwell in those many mansions of His Father’s house that the Lord Jesus is gone to prepare (Joh 14:2). Give yourselves up to this glorious work. But be judicious in all you do, lest you produce prejudice against true [Christian faith], instead of prepossession⁶ in its favor. Let your warmest affection, your greatest cheerfulness, your most engaging smiles be put on when you teach [the faith] to your children.

⁴ **solicitude** – care and concern.

⁵ **imbue** – fill, in the sense of saturate; inspire.

⁶ **prepossession** – influencing the mind.

Approach as nearly as possible to a seraphic⁷ form. Represent [following Christ] in all its beauty, loveliness, sanctity, and ineffable⁸ sweetness. Let them see it in your character as well as hear it from your lips.

Especially be careful not to enforce as a task what should be proposed as an object of hope and a source of delight. Let them see in you that piety,⁹ if in one respect it is a strait¹⁰ and narrow path, is in another a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. Do not inflict learning Scripture or hymns upon them as a *punishment* for offenses, and thus convert religion, which is the foretaste of heaven, into a penance that shall be to them like being tormented before their time. Especially do not make the Sabbath a day of gloom instead of gladness by such an accumulation of services as shall cause the day of rest to be physically more irksome¹¹ than the common labors of the week...

And now, to sum up all. Consider a mother's *charge*: an immortal creature; a mother's *duty*: to train him up for God, heaven, and eternity; a mother's *dignity*: to educate the family of the Almighty Creator of the universe; a mother's *difficulty*: to raise a fallen, sinful creature to holiness and virtue; a mother's *encouragement*: the promise of divine grace to assist her in her momentous duties; a mother's *relief*: to bear the burden of her cares to God in prayer; and a mother's *hope*: to meet her child in glory everlasting and spend eternal ages of delight with him before the throne of God and the Lamb.

But are mothers only to engage in this work of educating their children for God? No. Fathers, I speak to you, for the Bible speaks to you.¹² "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4)...Are you exercising your authority, giving your instructions, pouring out your prayers, and affording your example, all for the salvation of your children? Is it your wish, your ambition, your endeavor, and your supplication that they may be [godly Christian] men or only rich ones? Are you pouring your influence into the same channel as your holy wife? Are you helping or hindering her in her pious solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of your joint offspring? Happy, happy couple, where there is a sympathy of feeling and similarity of sentiment in the most momentous concern that can engage the attention of man, of angels, or of God—religion; where the husband and the wife are of one mind and one heart, not only in reference to themselves, but in regard also to their children, and where both are engaged in training them up for everlasting glory! I can compare such a couple, in their benevolent efforts for their

⁷ **seraphic** – resembling the beauty, purity, devotion of an angelic being.

⁸ **ineffable** – too great to be expressed in words.

⁹ **piety** – godliness.

¹⁰ **strait and narrow** – narrow and difficult.

¹¹ **irksome** – wearisome; burdensome.

¹² See FGB 228, *Fatherhood*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

children's welfare, only to the two angels who were sent down from heaven to rescue Lot and who, with holy and benevolent violence, took him by the hand to pluck him from the burning city and conducted him to the place of safety prepared by the mercy of Almighty God.

From *Female Piety*, in the public domain.

John Angell James (1785-1859): English Congregationalist preacher and author; born at Blandford, Dorsetshire, England.



Never give a command that you do not intend to be obeyed. There is no more effectual way of teaching a child disobedience than by giving commands that you have no intention of enforcing. A child is thus habituated to disregard its mother; and, in a short time, the habit becomes so strong and the child's contempt for the mother so confirmed that entreaties and threats are alike unheeded.—*J. S. C. Abbot*

A mother's power lies in the fact that she *prays* for her child.—*Abraham Kuyper*

The mother who is still present with children when they are young [should] be very diligent in teaching them and minding them of good things. When the fathers are abroad, the mothers have more frequent opportunities to instruct them, speaking to them of that which is most necessary and watching over them. This is the greatest service that most women can do for God in the world! Many a church that hath been blessed with a good minister may thank the pious education of mothers. And many a thousand souls in heaven may thank the holy care and diligence of mothers as the first effectual means. Good women this way (by the good education of their children) are ordinarily great blessings both to church and state. —*Richard Baxter*

THE MOTHER'S LEGACY TO HER UNBORN CHILD

Elizabeth Joscelyn (1595?-1622)¹

HAVING long, often, and earnestly desired of God that I might be a mother to one of His children and the time now drawing on that I hope He hath appointed to give thee unto me, it drew me into a consideration both wherefore I so earnestly desired thee and (having found that the true cause was to make thee happy) how I might attain this happiness for thee.

I knew it consisted not in honor, wealth, strength of body, or friends, though all these are great blessings. Therefore, it would be a weak request to desire thee only for an heir to my fortune. No, I never aimed at so poor an inheritance as the whole world for thee. Neither would I have begged of God so much pain, as I know I must endure, to have only possessed thee with earthly riches, of which today thou mayest be a great man, tomorrow a poor beggar. Nor did a hope to dandle² thy infancy move me to desire thee. For I know all the delight a parent can take in a child is honey mingled with gall.³

But the true reason that I have so often kneeled to God for thee is that thou mightest be an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. To which end I humbly beseech Almighty God thou mayest bend all thy actions and, if it be His blessed will, give thee so plentiful a measure of His grace that thou mayest serve Him as His minister, if He make thee a man.

It is true that this age holds the ministry a most contemptible office, fit only for poor men's children, younger brothers, and such as have no other means to live. But for God's sake, be not discouraged with these vain speeches: fortify yourself with remembering *what great worth the winning of one soul is in God's sight*, and you shall quickly find how great a place it is to be a minister unto the living God. If it will please Him to move your heart with His Holy Spirit, it will glow and burn

¹ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is an edited version of Elizabeth Joscelyn's *The Mother's Legacie to Her Unborn Childe*. It represents a distinctly female literary genre that appeared in 17th century England known as an "advice book." Advice books were a form of Renaissance literature in which a mother wrote instructions, predominantly spiritual, as a legacy to her children. Joscelyn's legacy is unique because, concerned about dying in childbirth, she wrote to her *unborn* child. Poignantly, Elizabeth bore a daughter, Theodora, on October 12, 1622, and died nine days later. [This article required more editing than usual for modern readers, so numerous editorial marks have been removed for easier reading.]

² **dandle** – play with or bounce a child.

³ **gall** – bile, stored in the gall bladder, is known for its bitterness. Used here metaphorically, the author contrasts bitterness with sweetness—the grief and joys of parenthood.

with zeal to do Him service. The Lord open thy lips that thy mouth may show forth His praise (Psa 51:15).

If I had skill to write, I would write all I apprehend of the happy estate of true, laboring ministers. But I may plainly say that of all men, they by their calling are the most truly happy. They are familiar with God, they labor in His vineyard, and they are so beloved of Him that He gives them abundance of knowledge. *O be one of them!* Let not the scorn of evil men hinder thee. Look how God hath provided for thee sufficient means. Thou needest not hinder thy study to look for a living, as the Israelites hindered their work to look for straw (Exo 5:6-23). If thou art not content with this, thou wilt not be with more. God deliver thee from covetousness!

I desire thee that, though thou takest a spiritual calling, thou wilt not seek after the livings of the church,⁴ nor promotions, though I honor them as I have great cause; but I would have thee so truly an humble and zealous minister that thy only end should be to do God service without desire of anything for thyself, except the kingdom of heaven. Yet as I would not have thee seek these things, so I would have thee as careful not to neglect God's blessings, but with all thankfulness to receive what He bestows and to be a careful steward, distributing it to those that have need.

I could not but choose to manifest this desire in writing, lest it should please God to deprive me of time to speak.⁵

And if thou art a daughter...read on, and thou shalt see my love and care of thee and thy salvation is as great as if thou wert a son and my fear greater.

It may perhaps, when thou comest to some discretion,⁶ appear strange to thee to receive these lines from a mother that died when thou wert born. But when thou seest men purchase land and store up treasure for their unborn babes, wonder not at me that I am careful for thy salvation, being such an eternal portion. And not knowing whether I shall live to instruct thee when thou art born, let me not be blamed though I write to thee before. Who would not condemn me if I should be careless of thy body while it is within me? Surely, a far greater care belongs to thy soul. To both these cares I will endeavor myself so long as I live.

Again, I may perhaps be wondered at for writing in this way, considering there are so many excellent books whose least note is worth all my meditations. I confess it and thus excuse myself. I write not to the world, *but to mine own child*, who, it may be, will more profit by a few weak instructions coming from a dead mother (who cannot every day praise or reprove it as it deserves) than by far better from

⁴ **livings...church** – benefices, that is, permanent church appointments for which property and income are provided in respect of pastoral duties.

⁵ **I could not...time to speak** – I had no choice but to write my desires to you, for fear that God's will for me is to perish without having time to speak to you.

⁶ **comest...discretion** – when you are able to exercise discernment.

much more learned. These things considered, neither the true knowledge of mine own weakness nor the fear that this may come to the world's eye and bring scorn upon my grave can keep my hand from expressing how much I covet thy salvation.

Therefore, dear child, *read here my love*. And if God take me from thee, be obedient to these instructions as thou oughtest to be unto me. I have learned them out of God's Word; I beseech Him that they may be profitable to thee.

(1) **The first charge I give thee, I learned from Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:1:** "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." It is an excellent beginning and a fit lesson for a child...To move thy heart to remember thy Creator betimes,⁷ meditate upon the benefits thou continually receivest. First, how He hath created thee when thou were nothing; redeemed thee by the death of His only Son, being worse than nothing; and now by mere grace, He hath given thee His Holy Spirit, sanctifying thee to an eternal kingdom.⁸ Thou canst not possibly understand how great these mercies are, but straight thy soul must cry, "What shall I do for so gracious a God? All the powers of my soul and body will I give to His service. My first thoughts will I dedicate to Him. Like Abel's sacrifice (Gen 4:4), I will present to Him the first fruits of my youth. In the strength of my age will I fall down before Him; and, if I live to old age, [I pray] that weakness will not let my knees bow nor my hands be lifted up. Yet shall my heart meditate on His goodness night and day, and my tongue shall be always telling of His marvelous works."

When thou hast thus remembered the infinite mercies of God, it is appropriate for thee to settle thyself to a constant service of Him; to order thy thoughts, words, and actions to His glory; and to covenant with thyself that thou wilt not break thy promises to God...Mark, I pray thee, these following rules for ordering thy life; and God will bless thee and all thy good endeavors.

(2) **At thy first waking in the morning, be careful of thyself that thou harbor in thy brain no vain, unprofitable, and, most of all, no ungodly thoughts to hinder thy morning sacrifice.**⁹ But immediately frame thyself¹⁰ to meditate on the mercies of God, the maliciousness of the devil, and thine own weakness. The devil's malice is as easily perceived [as your weakness is]; for even now he lies lurking ready to catch every good motion from thy heart, suggesting things more delightful to thy fancy and persuading thee to put off thy service of God though but for a little while.

⁷ **betimes** – before it is too late.

⁸ Joscelin, an Anglican, assumes the conversion of her child.

⁹ **morning sacrifice** – prayer of thanksgiving.

¹⁰ **frame thyself** – direct your thoughts.

But be warned and armed against his temptations. Be assured if thou once yield to neglect praying to God, but one half hour, when that time comes, thou shalt find thyself far more unfit and thy heart more dull to pray than before. Whereas, if thou preparest thyself to pray, even though thou art heavy and uncheerful in it, yet God, Who searches the heart and sees thy desire to pray—though thou canst not—will enlighten thee and prepare thy heart in anticipation of the next time, so that thou shalt find comfort. Therefore, take heed that the devil deceives you not, for you see his malice is not small in that he seeks to cheat you of all happiness presently and to come. For be assured you can take no true joy in earthly pleasures, no longer than you seek after heavenly.

Having thus discerned the infinite malice of the devil and your own exceeding weakness, how do you think you were preserved from his snares while you slept? Or do you think he only besets you when you are awake? No, be not deceived: he is not so fair an enemy. His hate to you is such that, if he could, he would tear your body and drag your soul to hell while you slept. Alas, all this he might have done because your strength is small to resist him. Now you must necessarily confess who only is able to preserve you: it is God and His mercy—not your desert¹¹—by which you are preserved. Gather to yourself a strong resolution with all your force to serve Him all the day and to resist all the temptations of the devil.

Then, being thoroughly awake (for surely, God likes not sleeping prayer), begin to give God thanks and to desire the continuance of His mercy towards thee in these words, until thou canst find such as may better express thine own soul: “O eternal God, gracious from the beginning and merciful to the latter ending of the world, I give Thee humble thanks that according to Thine abundant goodness, Thou hast graciously defended me this night from all dangers that might have happened unto me. I beseech Thee to continue this Thy favorable goodness toward me, and so grant me Thy grace that in all my thoughts, words, and actions I may seek Thy glory and evermore so live in Thy fear that I may die in Thy favor, for Thy Son my only Savior’s sake. Amen.”

(3) Having thus invited God into your soul, take heed you offend not against so great and glorious a Guest...O think, sinful soul, what care oughtest thou to have when the living God graciously grants to dwell in thee: O watch, O be wary. Do not, my dear child, O do not willfully offend Him...But if out of weakness thou offend against Him, run straight before He can be gone, for He is merciful and will stay a while after thou hast sinned to expect thy repentance. Run quickly! Esteem no sin small! Learn to be ashamed to commit sin; but, being committed, hope not to hide it from God by any other means than by hearty repentance.¹² In

¹¹ **your desert** – what you deserve.

¹² See FGB 203, *Repentance*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

His Son's passion,¹³ He will bury thine offences so as He will hide them from Himself. The Lord will not despise a contrite heart; and though He let thee kneel long, He will have mercy at the last. Learn of Jacob to wrestle with God and to cry with a fervent spirit, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen 32:26). Our Savior saith, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Mat 11:12).

(4) Thus you see, it must be an eager, not a slothful course that must bring you to heaven. Take heed, therefore, that you avoid all the kinds of this sin. Whatsoever you go about, do it with cheerfulness. Be ashamed of idleness, as thou art a man; but tremble at it, as thou art a Christian. For be sure the devil never is so happy in his temptations as when he employs them on a slothful man who cannot endure to take so much pains as to resist him. What more wretched estate can there be in the world? First, to be hated of God as an idle drone,¹⁴ not fit for His service; then through extreme poverty to be despised by all the world. Oh, then by no means yield thy youth to sloth! But as soon as thou hast made thy prayer to God, prepare to rise; and rising, use this prayer: "In Thy name, O blessed Savior, I arise, Who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, created me and with Thine own most precious blood hast redeemed me. I beseech Thee this day to govern, keep, and bless me. Lead me forth in every good way. Therein direct and continue me; and after this frail and miserable life, bring me to that blessed life that hath no end, for Thy great merit and mercies sake. Amen."

(5) Thou art no sooner broken out of the arms of sloth, but pride steps in diligently, waiting to furnish thee with any vain toy¹⁵ in thy attire.¹⁶ And though I believe there are divers sorts of pride more pestilent to the soul than this of apparel, yet this is dangerous enough. And I am sure [it] betrays a man's folly more than any other. Is it not a monstrous thing to see a man, whom God hath created of an excellent form, each part answering the due proportion of another, who by a fantastical habit¹⁷ make himself so ugly that one cannot find amongst all God's creatures anything like him? One man, though not resembling another in shape or face, yet for his rational soul is like another; but these fashionists¹⁸ have (I fear) exchanged their reasonable souls for proud souls without reason. Could they else deform and transform themselves by these newfangled fashions and apish¹⁹ be-

¹³ **passion** – suffering and death; See FGBs 207, *Substitution*, 225, *The Work of Christ*, 226, *Christ upon the Cross*, and 227, *Atonement*.

¹⁴ **idle drone** – lazy person.

¹⁵ **toy** – something of little essential value, but valued as an ornament.

¹⁶ See FGB 216, *Modest Apparel*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁷ **fantastical habit** – clothing that shows the person to be foolishly attentive to and vain in his appearance.

¹⁸ **fashionists** – followers of fashion, who conform to the prevailing style of dress.

¹⁹ **apish** – ape-like in imitation.

havior: crindging,²⁰ shrugging, starting,²¹ and playing the fantastiques²² every way, so that they may truly say when they are fashionable that they are not like other men? *For who wants to be like them?* I desire thee for God's sake—*shun this vanity*, whether thou art a son or daughter. If a daughter, I confess thy task is harder because thou art weaker and thy temptations to this vice greater. For thou shalt see those whom perhaps thou shalt think less able, exalted far above thee in this kind; and it may be thou wilt desire to be like them, if not to out-go²³ them. But believe and remember what I tell thee: the end of all these vanities is bitter as gall. Oh, the remembrance of misspent time, when thou shalt grow in years and have attained no other knowledge than to dress thyself! When thou shalt see half, perhaps all, thy time spent and that of all thou hast sowed thou hast nothing to reap but repentance—*late repentance*—how wilt thou grieve! How wilt thou accuse one folly for bringing in another and in thy memory cast over the cause of each misfortune that hath befallen thee, until passing from one to another, at last thou findest *thy corrupt will* to be the first cause. Then thou wilt with grief enough perceive that if thou hadst served God when thou servedst thy fond desires, thou wouldst now have peace of heart. The God of mercy give thee grace to remember Him in the days of thy youth.

Mistake me not nor give yourself leave to take too much liberty with saying, “My mother was too strict.” No, I am not: for I give you leave to follow *modest* fashions, but not to be a *beginner* of fashions...In one word, this is all I desire: that you will not set your heart on such foolish things. You shall see that this modest carriage²⁴ will win you reputation and love with the wise and virtuous sort.

If you will desire praise, follow the example of those spiritual women, whose virtuous fame time hath not power to raze out,²⁵ such as devout Anna, who served the Lord with fasting and prayer (Luk 2:36-38); just Elizabeth, who served God without reproof (Luk 1:6); and religious Esther, who taught her maids to fast and pray (Est 4:15).

I am so fearful that thou couldest fall into this sin that I could spend my little time of life in exhorting thee from it. I know it is the most dangerous, subtle sin that can steal the heart of man. It will alter shapes as often as the chameleon doth colors. *Shun it for thy soul's sake!* For if thou entertain pride, it is such a shameless flatterer that it will make thee believe thou art greater, wiser, more learned than all the company, when indeed, thou wilt prove thyself the greatest fool of them, wearying them all with thy vain talk.

²⁰ **crindging** – behaving in a servile way.

²¹ **starting** – making sudden movements.

²² **fantastiques** – those who wear extravagant clothing.

²³ **out-go** – surpass.

²⁴ **modest carriage** – humble behavior.

²⁵ **raze out** – erase.

Solomon saith, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Pro 16:18). And our blessed Savior, the true pattern of humility, exhorts us to learn of Him that was lowly and meek in heart (Mat 11:29). And if we do so, He promises we shall find rest unto our souls. Neither lack there curses, threatening where persuasions will not serve: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luk 14:11). Read the Holy Scriptures often and diligently, and thou shalt find continual threatenings against pride, punishment of pride, and warnings from pride. Thou shalt find no sin so heavily punished as this: it made devils of angels, a beast of great Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 5:21), and dogs' meat of Jezebel (1Ki 9:10, 36; 2Ki 21:23). I will conclude with a good man's saying: "If all the sins reigning in the world were burnt to ashes, even the ashes of pride would be able to produce them all again."

(6) Therefore, avoiding all manner of pride, make thyself decently ready, which being done, retire to a place alone, where humbling thyself upon thy knees, again renew thy prayers, humbly confessing and earnestly desiring forgiveness for all thy sins. And use Doctor Smith's morning prayer;²⁶ I know not a better one, nor ever did I find more comfort in any. In advising you to a set form of prayer, I do not prohibit conceived prayer, but humbly beg of God to give you grace to pray often out of your own meditations according to His will.

(7) When you have finished your private prayer, be sure that you absent not yourself from public prayer, if it be used in the house where you live. [When you have finished,] go and use any lawful recreation, either for thy profit or pleasure. And from all these exercises, reserve a time to sit down to some good study, but use that most that may make thee greatest—*theology*. It will make thee greater, richer, happier than the greatest kingdom of the earth, even if thou couldest possess it. "If any man serve me," saith Christ, "him will my Father honour" (Joh 12:26). Therefore, if thou desirest *honor*, serve the Lord and thou art sure of it. If thy aim be *riches*, Saint Paul assures thee that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Ti 6:6). If thou covet *pleasure*, set David's delight before thine eyes: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches" (Psa 119:14). And in the 92nd Psalm, he saith, "For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work" (92:4). In the 4th Psalm, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart" (4:7); and reading the 91st Psalm, thou shalt see what manner of blessings they are with which God makes His children merry. And when thou hast once fixed thy heart to this study, it will be so sweet that the more thou learnest, the more thou wilt desire; and the more thou desirest, the more God will show thee His love. Thou wilt study so well in private and practice it in all thy actions publicly; thou

²⁶ Henry Smith, "A Morning Prayer" in *The Works of Henry Smith*, Vol. 2, Tentmaker Publications, 460; Joscelin also commends Smith's "An Evening Prayer" in the same volume.

wilt weigh thy thoughts so evenly that thy words shall not be light. Now, a few lines I will use to persuade thee to be advised in thy words.

(8) Though it is as much to say, “Remember thy Creator when thou speakest,” as if I could use all the exhortations and tell thee all the perils that belong to speech. Yet so apt are we to forget God in our foolish talk that sometimes we by our discourse would make gods of ourselves. Therefore, it will not be amiss to receive a few instructions, though weak, from me for ordering thy speech. The morning I have dedicated to meditation, prayer, good studies, and honest recreation. The noon time is most used for discourse, it being all a man can do while he eats. And it is a time wherein a man ought to be careful of his speech, having before him God’s good blessings to refresh his body and honest company to recreate his mind. Therefore, he ought to be no way offensive in his speech, either to God or good men. But most especially take heed that neither heedlessness nor earnestness in thy discourse cause thee *to take God’s holy name in vain*, but always speak of Him with reverence and understanding. And I pray thee, as thou wouldest have blessings multiplied upon thee, let no speech pass from thee that may grieve chaste ears. How hateful is obscene speech in rude people! But it makes one of gentle birth offensive to all honest company. Solomon says, “A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness” (Pro 12:23); and “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life” (Pro 13:3); and, “The lips of the wise shall preserve them” (Pro 14:3).

(9) If thou keep thy thoughts holy and thy words pure, I shall not need to fear, but all thy actions will be honest. But my fear that thou shouldest know the way and yet go aside will not suffer my counsel to leave thee alone until thou come to thy journey’s end.

First, then, be careful when thou art alone that thou do nothing that thou wouldest not do if men saw thee. Remember that God’s eye is always open, and thine own conscience will be witness enough against thee. Next, be sure that no action of thine may be a scandal to thy profession, I mean to the profession of the true religion. This indeed is as much as to say to thee, “Eschew²⁷ evil” (1Pe 3:11). For there is not the least sin thou canst do, but the enemies of truth will be glad to say, “Lo, this is one of them that professes God in his mouth, but see what his life is!” Therefore a great care ought a Christian to have, especially those whom God hath set as lights in His Church.

Whatsoever thou art about to do, examine it by God’s commandments: if it be agreeable to them, go on cheerfully. And though the end answer not thy hopes, never grieve nor grudge, but be glad that God’s will is performed. Let thy trust in

²⁷ **eschew** – avoid; keep clear of.

Him assure thee that all things work together for the best to them that love God (Rom 8:28).

The next vice too, too common in this age is drunkenness, which is the highway to hell. A man may travel in it from sin to sin until the devil shew him he can go no further—as a traveler from inn to inn until he comes to his journey's end. Oh, think how filthy is that sin that makes a man a beast all his life and a devil at his death! Solomon asks, "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?" (Pro 23:29). And in the next verse he answers, "They that tarry long at the wine" (Pro 23:30). And to the end of the chapter, he sets forth the miseries occasioned by this vice.

That thou mayest avoid this sin, be careful in the choice of thy friends; for it is they that will betray thee to this sin. Never make choice of a drunkard as thy companion, much less thy friend. To be a drunkard is to be a man unfit for God's service or good men's company. I beseech God give thee grace to detest it.

Next, I must exhort thee from a sin that I cannot name: thou must search thine own heart for it. It is *thy darling sin*: to enjoy it, thou couldest resist all others—at least thou thinkest so. But do not harbor it: search diligently for it in thine own nature; and when thou hast found it, cast it headlong from thee. It is thy soul's subtle betrayer, and all thy other sins depend upon it. There is not so much danger in all the rest that thou contendest with, as in this one that thou art unwilling to call a sin.

(10) When thou hast spent the day in religious and honest exercises, in the evening return again to some good meditation or study. Conclude with prayer, commending thyself to God; so shalt thou joyfully go to thy supper. When this is done and the time of rest comes, as thou beganest in the morning, so close the day with humble thanksgiving for all the benefits that day received and hearty repentance for all thy sins committed, naming and bewailing them. The oftener thou dost settle thy accounts with God, thy sleep will be sounder; and thou shalt awake with a heart full of joy, ready to serve the Lord.

Last, commit thyself and all that is thine to God in zealous prayer, using Doctor Smith's evening prayer, as his morning. Though both be for a family, yet are they easily reduced to a private man's prayer. So going to bed, take thy rest, beginning and ending in Him Who is both First and Last (Isa 44:6; 48:12; Rev 1:11, 17; 22:13). Thus spend the six days thou hast to labor in that thou mayest be ready to celebrate the Sabbath, to which there belongs another "Remember" (Exo 20:8).

(11) Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. This duty so often and earnestly commanded by God Himself in the Old Testament, so confirmed to us in the New by the resurrection of our Savior, in memory whereof it is called the Lord's Day and perpetually celebrated by the Church, yet in these days, too many

keep no Sabbath (or at the most but a shadow of a Sabbath), as if we neither had part in the creation nor redemption of the world. Where can we find someone that will lose a good bargain rather than make it on the Lord's Day? Or that will bridle his own desires to sanctify that day?

Seeing therefore this danger, in which thou mayest easily be entrapped by the devil's subtlety and following the multitude, I cannot but with all my power exhort thee, *carefully to keep the Lord's Day*. To which end I pray thee, mark well the Fourth Commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exo 20:8-11). If thou wilt learn how to serve Him as a good scholar, He teaches thee an admirable way, both by rule and example. First, by *rule*: Thou shalt do no manner of work in it. Then by *example*: He made the whole world in six days, and He rested the seventh; wherefore, He blessed it.

Seeing God thus commands thee by His power, persuades thee in His mercy, and teaches thee both by rule and His own most gracious example, how canst thou be so devoid of grace, nay of reason, as not to obey so just a *Master*? So merciful a *Father*? So gracious a *Teacher*? If thou make not a conscience²⁸ of keeping this day, howsoever a dull security may possess thee to flatter thyself, thou indeed makest conscience of nothing. For I am persuaded, if thou canst dispense with thyself to profane this day, either for thy profit or pleasure, thou wilt not stick upon²⁹ the like occasion to break all the rest of the Commandments, one after another.

Therefore, for Christ's sake, be watchful that the devil deceives you not; neither let his agents draw thee away from this day's duty. He is *always* busy and ready at hand to draw thee away from God, but this day, without doubt, he doubles all his forces. He will provoke thine eyes to sleep; he will send heaviness and dullness to thy heart and, perhaps, pain to thy body, if he can so much prevail. He will surely use any sleight, any trick to keep thee from God's house and from the congregation of His people. It behooves thee by how much greater his practices are against thee that day, so much the more to fortify thyself against him. By no means, let him stay thee from the church! There, God hath promised to be present, and *there He is*. Darest thou then, silly wretch, to absent thyself from Him? I know thou darest not. Go then with a heart prepared to pray by prayer; and going, meditate on God's great mercies in the creation of the world, His greater mercy in redeem-

²⁸ **make not a conscience** – make it not a matter of conscience.

²⁹ **stick upon** – hesitate.

ing it, and mingle with thy meditation prayers that may apply these great blessings to thyself.

So approach and enter with reverent and fervent zeal the house of God! And throwing away all thoughts, except those that may further the good work thou art about, bend thy knees and heart to God, desiring of Him His Holy Spirit that thou mayest join with the congregation in zealous prayer and earnest attention to His Word preached. Though perhaps thou hearest a minister preach weakly, as thou thinkest, yet give him thine attention; and thou shalt find that he will deliver something profitable to thy soul, either something thou hast not heard before or not marked or forgotten or well put in practice. It is fit thou shouldst be often put in mind of those things concerning thy salvation...Learn then to prepare thy heart early for this day, which if thou observest well, God will bless thee and thy labors all the week. Thus far I have endeavored to exhort thee to thy duty towards God.

(12) Of which the honor due to thy parents is such a part as cannot be separated, for God commands it: “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exo 20:12). It is the first commandment of the Second Table, as “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo 20:3) is of the First. Idolatry being the greatest sin against God and disobedience to parents being the ringleader in sins against man, we are first warned of them, as if in case we should fall into them, it were too late to avoid the other. For if we once become idolaters in heart, it will be no hard matter to bow down to an image, to abuse God’s holy name, or to profane His Sabbath. So if we dare disobey good parents, at that breaking of God’s Law, theft, murder, adultery, falseness, covetousness easily enter.

(13) The next duty equal to this is one thou must perform to all the world in general: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Mat 7:12). This is the commandment our Savior gives us: “Love one another.” By this we shall be known to be His, if we love one another as He hath loved us (Joh 13:34-35). Yet of all that is commanded us, there is *nothing* more contrary to our wicked nature than this loving our neighbor as ourselves. We can with ease envy him, if he be rich, or scorn him, if he be poor—*but love him?* Nay, the devil hath more craft than so. It is hard for him if men should once begin to love one another; therefore he useth all art to stir dissension among as many as he can and to mix love with dissimulation.³⁰

To avoid this, consider well that God is the author of peace and love and that strife and contention proceed of the devil. Then if thou art the child of God, do the works of God: love thy neighbor as He hath commanded, lest thou provoke our blessed Savior when He shall see that mark of the devil—*malice*—in thee and

³⁰ **dissimulation** – hypocrisy.

say as He once did to the unbelieving Jews, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Joh 8:44).

Oh, take heed thou offend not God thus grievously that He shall disclaim thee as none of His because thou dost not love those that are His. This, if well weighed, is enough to make every man charitable, if it were only for fear to hate whom God loved. But to believe or judge that God should hate where thou doest is such an impious uncharitableness³¹ as a good Christian must needs tremble at. God hath given thee no authority to judge any man, but He hath commanded thee to love thine enemy: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:44). *Sine fine finis*.³²

From *The Mother's Legacie to Her Unborn Childe*, in the public domain.

Elizabeth Brooke Joscelin (1595?-1622): granddaughter of Anglican theologian and bishop, William Chaderton (1540?-1608); born in Cheshire, England.



What is a child but a piece of yourself wrapt up in another skin?—*John Flavel*

³¹ **impious uncharitableness** – ungodly lack of Christian love.

³² *Sine fine finis* – *Latin* = end without end.

LOVING, WISE CHASTENING

Richard Adams (c. 1626-1698)

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.
—Colossians 3:21

CORRECTION in a due manner and suitable rewards for well-doing are necessary to check¹ rudeness and encourage an ingenuous deportment.² As good documents do put in wisdom, so due corrections do drive out folly. A child is not to be left to himself, lest he bring the parent to shame: a rod and reproof may give wisdom to prevent it (Pro 29:15). Therefore, God bids, “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul” (Pro 29:17). Elsewhere: “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest³ him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Pro 23:13-14). Here is not only a [general command], but a promise of good fruit upon discharge of the duty in a right manner; but it should be sued-out⁴ by prayer because the neglect of this duty is very dangerous to root and branch, parent and child (2Sa 7:27-28; 1Sa 3:13; 1Ki 1:6). Yea, and the greater need there is of parents’ prayer here, lest they should fall into the extreme that my text emphatically forbids. Christian parents, whose children are to “obey them in the Lord,” are concerned to chastise in the fear of God and therefore to seek that this appointment of His may be sanctified, being joined with instruction; that it may be [effective] by the blessing of God in Christ (1Ti 4:5; Mic 6:9)...And here, further, parents are concerned to use much Christian prudence that their children may understand,

First: That they are, from *a principle of love* for their children’s amendment and welfare, necessitated to this sharp work that God hath enjoined them in just circumstances, as He Himself “chasteneth whom he loveth” (Rev 3:19; Heb 12:6–8; Deu 8:5). Therefore, if they should spare the rod through fondness,⁵ God, Who

¹ **check** – stop.

² **an ingenuous deportment** – honorable manners.

³ **beatest** – the idea here is not savage or brutal beating with fists or clubs, but rather the strokes of a rod: “The sage is not talking about a rigorous beating, but rather something equivalent to a spanking. This may be surmised from the matter-of-fact statement ‘They will not die’ as well as this book’s general emphasis on moderation, kindness, and gentleness.” (Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, Baker Academic, 426)

⁴ **sued-out** – to make application before a court for the grant of a legal process; therefore, to cry out to the Judge of heaven and earth in prayer that discipline would be effective.

⁵ **fondness** – foolish affection; unreasoning tenderness.

knows the heart and affections best, might censure⁶ them for hating their children (Pro 13:24; 3:12)... Hence,

Secondly: That it is their children's folly, *not their own passion*, which hath engaged them in this smarting exercise. Overmuch heat would be like an over-hot medicine that scalds rather than cures. Some parents are apt to go beyond just measures and to chastise for their own pleasure; but they must learn of God to aim at their children's profit and not correct them *but upon good reason* (Heb 12:10) ...Parents should not take the rod to vent their own anger, but to subdue their children's sin, which a man may not suffer upon his neighbor without rebuke, lest he be guilty of hating him in his heart (Lev 19:17). Certainly then, [he should not suffer sin] upon his child, whom he is obliged, not only to admonish verbally, but to chastise really.

Thirdly: But first he should do as God did with our first parents: convict him of his nakedness (Gen 3:11–13), that is, show him the evil of his lying, railing, idleness, or other faults [that] he is chargeable with, as opposite to the Word of God and prejudicial to his own soul (Pro 12:22; 8:36) and that he is made to smart for the cure of this evil. Parents may let their children know they dare not suffer [this evil] to remain longer uncorrected, since delays may prove dangerous to the patient if the rod be withheld. The festering wound may rankle⁷ and come to a gangrene, if not lanced in due time. A *mother's* love is seen in chastening "betimes,"⁸ both in respect of the age of the child and of its fault (Pro 23:13; 13:24). If it is not too soon for children to sin, it should not be thought too soon for parents to correct [promptly], before the sin grows strong, gets head, and sprouts forth. The child should be taken "while there is hope" (Pro 19:18). The twig may be bent whilst it is young, and the sin mortified if nipped in the bud. God, we find, hath been very severe in [pointing out] the first violations of His statutes, as for gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day and Aaron's sons' offering strange fire (Num 15:25; Lev 10:2). So parents should timely curb the first exorbitances⁹ of their children. Hence,

Fourthly: They should let them see they are resolved, after serious deliberation, not to be diverted by the [whining] and [bad temper] of their unhumiliated children from inflicting due punishment, since the wise man chargeth, "Let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Pro 19:18), so that they may not remain fearless. Yet it must then be in compassion that they may conceive, as the Father of heaven is afflicted in the affliction of His, so are they in the affliction of their children. And as the

⁶ **censure** – to find fault with and condemn as wrong.

⁷ **rankle...gangrene** – infect surrounding parts causing the death and rotting of body tissue.

⁸ **betimes** – early.

⁹ **exorbitances** – misconduct; departures from the right path.

Lord doth it “in measure,” though He will not suffer them to go unpunished, so do they (Isa 63:9; Jer 30:11).

My text [limits] the correction so that it may not exceed a just proportion to the discouraging of children, whose different tempers, as well as different faults, are to be considered, *so as no more be laid upon them than they are able to bear* (1Co 10:13). There should therefore be a special care taken that the chastisement be no other than what is [appropriate]. Physicians endeavor to apportion the dose [that] they give to the strength of the patient and the peccant humor¹⁰ they would correct. There must be a rational consideration of the age, sex, and disposition of the child, the nature and circumstances of the fault, and what satisfaction is offered by the delinquent upon ingenuous confession, or possibly some interposition of another; so that the offended parent may keep-up his authority, be victorious in his chastisements, and come off with honor and good hopes of the child’s amendment. For a parent should be ever ready to forgive and to connive¹¹ often at smaller failings—wherein there is no manifest sin against God—in confidence of gaining the child’s affections, by tenderness and kind forbearance, toward the things that are most desirable...Be sure, our apostle, both in my text, and to the Ephesians, is altogether against any discouraging chastisement and requires moderation.

From “What Are the Duties of Parents and Children; and How Are They to Be Managed According to Scripture?” in *Puritan Sermons*, Vol. 2, (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, 1981), 303–304.

Richard Adams (c. 1626-1698): English Presbyterian minister; born at Worrall, England.



The greatest moral power in the world is that which a mother exercises over her young child.—*Adolphe Monod*

¹⁰ **peccant humor** – diseased conditions.

¹¹ **connive** – shut one’s eyes to an action that ought to be opposed, but that one sympathizes with.

A MOTHER'S ENCOURAGEMENT

James Cameron (1809-1873)

PERHAPS in no department of Christian exertion are influences of a depressing kind more numerous than in that which you, as mothers, occupy. But, blessed be God, there is an exhaustless fund of all you need for your encouragement and support. Permit me to direct your attention, first of all, to the encouraging fact, that

The work in which you are engaged is directly and pre-eminently the work of God. The great end for which the created universe was called into being and for which it is upheld from age to age is the *manifestation of the divine glory*. In all that God does or permits to be done, He is actuated by a regard to this. All agencies—angelic and human, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate—are made to subserve¹ in all their actions this great design. The tendency of all the apparently involved working of the whole machinery of the universe, whether moral or physical, is to produce motion in this one direction. In the salvation of fallen man by the remedial provisions of the gospel, this great end is especially promoted—for “by the Church” is made known, even “unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10).

And by what instrumentality is a redeemed Church to be raised up from amongst the sinful children of men? By the instrumentality of those who have themselves, by the grace of God, been delivered from the guilt and the power of sin and made “[vessels] unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use” (2Ti 2:21). By means of human agency, the multitude that no man can number is to be gathered home to the Redeemer’s fold. And you are they whom God has appointed to train up those who are to embark in this glorious enterprise! To you is committed the task of molding and fashioning the human agencies by which God’s great purpose of glorifying Himself forever in the sight of all intelligent beings is to be accomplished! In your hands are the leaders of the public sentiment of the next generation—the Luthers, the Knoxes,...the Whitefields, the Wilberforces of a future age. They are in your hands; and through them, you wield the destinies of millions yet unborn. I have already spoken of the awful responsibility of such a situation; but there is another light in which, likewise, I would have you view it.

Consider how honorable a situation it is to have the most important part of the work of God committed to you! Consider how near it brings you to God: to have the training, not merely of his soldiers, but of those who are to officer his armies

¹ **subserve** – serve as a means of furthering.

and lead them on to glorious, yet bloodless victory. You occupy the highest, the noblest, and the most honorable position in which a human being can be placed. Murmur not that you are excluded from camps, cabinets, and senates; yours is a higher vocation. You are directly engaged in that work that has employed the tongues, the pens, the labors, the hearts, of the world's best and wisest in every age—the work for which the goodly fellowship of the prophets lived, for which the glorious company of the apostles labored, for which the noble army of martyrs died. To witness the progress of this work, angels stoop from their exalted thrones and watch with intensest interest the unfolding of every plan, the development of every principle, and the accomplishment of every event that bears upon it.

For the furtherance of this work, the Son of the Highest left the throne of heaven and became a wanderer on earth,² submitting to the reproach and scorn of men, to the anguish and ignominy³ of the cross. For this, also, the divine Spirit is sent forth from the Father and the Son. In short, this is the work, for the furtherance of which the noblest energies in heaven and earth have been and are continually put forth. Compared with it, the fleeting interests of time dwindle into a speck. But how is it that we derive from such considerations matter of encouragement? Very obviously, as for instance, thus: If you are engaged in a work that God has more at heart (if we may so speak) than aught else in the universe because thereby His own glory is most abundantly manifested, can you for a moment suppose that He will leave you to toil in that work unnoticed and uncared for? Such a supposition is alike impious⁴ and absurd. To admit it would be to impeach the divine wisdom, as well as the divine goodness. In immediate connection, then, with the consideration that it is the work of God in which you are engaged, consider in the second place

That God is always willing to grant you the strength and wisdom you need for the successful discharge of your important duties. On the throne of grace He ever sits, ready to dispense blessings, countless and rich, to all who ask. Never is His ear turned away from the cry of the needy suppliant.⁵ What an inexhaustible fund of encouragement does this truth present! At what time your heart is overwhelmed, look to the Rock that is higher than you (Psa 61:2). In the confidence of filial⁶ love, cast your burden upon the Lord, assured that He will sustain you. He cannot disappoint the expectations that His own Word teaches you to cherish. He will be your Instructor, your Counsellor, your Guide, your Comforter, your Refuge, your Fortress, your Sun, and your Shield. Do you feel that you lack⁷ strength? *Go to God.*

² See FGB 219, *The Person of Christ*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ **ignominy** – public disgrace; dishonor.

⁴ **impious** – disrespectful; irreverent toward God.

⁵ **suppliant** – one who humbly prays.

⁶ **filial** – having the relationship of a child to a parent.

⁷ The original word *want* has been replaced with *lack*.

He is the Almighty One in Whom all strength dwells. Do you feel that you lack wisdom? *Go to God*. He is “the only wise God” (1Ti 1:17); and of His wisdom, “He giveth unto all men liberally, and upbraideth not” (Jam 1:5). Do you feel that you lack patience? *Go to God*. He is “the God of patience” (Rom 15:5). Do you feel that you are in danger of fainting by the way? *Go to God*. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength” (Isa 40:29). In short, do you feel bowed down under a sense of insufficiency and unworthiness? *Go to God*. Your sufficiency is of Him (2Co 3:5). “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2Co 9:8). In all generations, He has been the dwelling-place of His people, a refuge in the day of distress, a stay and support in the time of trouble.

Listen to the sweet strains of the sweet singer of Israel, who had often tried God’s faithfulness to His promises: “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psa 34:3-8). You may derive much encouragement from the fact that

Thousands of Christian mothers have tried the faithfulness of God to His promise and have had the happiness of witnessing the success of their labors in the conversion of their offspring. The history of the Church of God is full of instances in point. Let us look at one or two.

The case of Augustine⁸...is a striking one. He was one of the brightest ornaments of Christianity in the latter part of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. But up to his twenty-eighth year, he lived in sin. From his remarkable *Confessions*,⁹ written by him after his conversion, we learn that he broke loose from every restraint and gave himself up “to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph 4:19). He had, however, a pious mother; and amidst all his wanderings, her tears and prayers came up for a memorial before God. At length, her cry was heard and the answer came. From her son’s own lips, she one day received the glad tidings of his conversion to God; and the voice of lamentation was changed into the song of praise. Not long after, as they were journeying together, she said, “My son, what have I to do here any longer? The only thing for which I wished to live was your conversion, and that the Lord has now granted me in an abundant

⁸ **Aurelius Augustine** (354-430) – Bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa and theologian.

⁹ *Confessions* – in the modern sense of the term, Augustine’s *Confessions*, written between 397 and 401 A.D., was the first autobiography ever written. It’s most famous line is “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.”

manner.” Five days after, she was seized with a fever, which, in a few days more, wafted her spirit into that blissful region where all tears are forever wiped away. And the son, for whom she had shed so many tears and breathed so many prayers, lived to be the admiration of his age and the means of the conversion of thousands of his fellowmen.

That eminent servant of Christ, John Newton,¹⁰ was the son of a praying mother! Even at the worst period of his life, profane and dissolute¹¹ as he was, the influence of the pious counsels that he received in childhood was never obliterated. He has himself left it on record that in the midst of the most daring wickedness, the remembrance of his mother's prayers haunted him continually. At times, these impressions were so vivid that “he could almost feel his mother's soft hand resting on his head, as when she used to kneel beside him in early boyhood and plead for God's blessing on his soul.” There is no reason to doubt that these impressions, received in childhood and retaining their hold of the spirit in [later] life, were among the principal means by which he was arrested in his career of sin and made a zealous and successful propagator of the gospel that he had so long despised...

A faithful and zealous minister of Christ gives the following account of himself in writing to a friend: “...Ah! Sir, you know but little of my obligations to almighty grace and redeeming love. I look back with dismay and horror to the time when I led the van¹² in wickedness...Even now my heart bleeds at the thought of the nights when, mad with intoxication, I have returned to my tender mother between two and three o'clock, burst open the window, poured out a torrent of abuse, and sunk upon the bed, a monster of iniquity. Next morning, I have been aroused by a mournful voice, smothered with heavy sobs and tears. I have listened; and to my inexpressible astonishment, found it was my mother pouring out her soul in this language: ‘O Lord, Oh mercy, mercy, mercy, mercy upon my poor child. Lord, I will not, cannot give him up—he is still my child. Surely he is not yet out of the reach of mercy. O Lord, hear, hear, I beseech thee, a mother's prayers. Spare, oh spare, for Christ's sake, the son of her old age. O Absalom, my son; O Absalom, my son, my son!’ (2Sa 19:4). Yes! Precious mother, thy prayers are now answered; and thy child—thy worthless, guilty child—still lives a monument of boundless grace and incomprehensible mercy”...Let one more fact suffice. It is one that speaks volumes in proof of our position. An inquiry was instituted in the United States in six theological seminaries, belonging to three different denominations of Christians, by which it was ascertained that of 507 students who were

¹⁰ **John Newton** (1725-1807) – Anglican minister, author of *Amazing Grace* and numerous other hymns.

¹¹ **dissolute** – overindulging in sensual pleasures.

¹² **van** – the foremost position of a company of persons moving forward.

being educated for the ministry, no fewer than 428 were children of praying mothers.

Christian mothers! Be of good courage! You are surrounded with a great cloud of witnesses—witnesses to the faithfulness of God’s promise, witnesses to the power of believing prayer, witnesses to the efficacy of sound religious instruction. Go forward in your work with holy confidence. Great and many, indeed, are your difficulties, but greater is He that is for you than all that can be against you! “Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” (Isa 26:4). In due time you shall reap if you faint not (Gal 6:9). May the Lord grant you grace to be faithful, and may you at last have the unspeakable happiness of entering, along with all who have been committed to your care, into the heavenly holy place, there to celebrate forever the praise of redeeming love and to serve God day and night without ceasing.

From Three Lectures to Christian Mothers.



A GOSPEL CALL TO MOTHERS

James Cameron (1809-1873)

*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for
I am God, and there is none else.—Isaiah 45:22*

I have addressed these [articles] to Christian mothers; but as they may possibly be perused by some who are not Christians, I feel that I cannot allow them to go to press without adding a few words to all who may read them and who have not the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God (Rom 8:16). Reader! *Are you a child of God?* Do not answer the question hastily. Thousands imagine they are, who will find at last that they have been mistaken. The Word of God teaches us that men may not only live deceived, but die deceived—flattering themselves that all is well and never discovering their mistake until they open their eyes in the place of woe.¹ Oh! Think it not strange, therefore, that we urge upon you the inquiry, “Are you a child of God?” Ponder the solemn question. Keep it before you. And remember that you are not a child of God unless you have been changed in heart and life by the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus (Eph 4:21).

What, then, is the state of your heart? Is it supremely set on the trifles, the vanities, the pursuits of the present life? Or is it set on “those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col 3:1)? Is it the abode of unholy passions? Or is it a temple of the Holy Ghost, filled with peace, love, and holy joy? What is the state of your life?

Are you living after the sight of your own eyes, “according to the course of this world” (Eph 2:2)? Or are you adorning the doctrines of God the Savior by a conversation becoming the gospel—bringing forth the fruit of righteousness and keeping yourself unspotted from the world (Jam 1:27)? Oh! *Be not deceived!* If you have not been changed in heart and life, you are *not* a child of God. And until you are thus changed by [believing] the truth, you are in “the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Act 8:23). Your external observance of the forms of religion cannot save you. Your amiable dispositions² cannot save you. Your worldly morality cannot save you. Your deeds of beneficence cannot save you. With all these, you may find heaven’s gate shut against you and “the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Mat 8:12). Do you hesitate to believe this? Do you say, “This is a hard saying!”? Ah! Reader! If it were my saying merely, it would be a small mat-

¹ See FGB 211, *Hell*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² **amiable dispositions** – friendly, pleasant qualities.

ter; but it is the saying of Him by Whom you are to be judged: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3).

These are the words of “the faithful and true witness” (Rev 3:14), and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one word of His fall to the ground. Oh! Put not away from you the solemn impression that these words are fitted to produce by saying that God is merciful, and perhaps after all He may allow you to escape. I know, and rejoice to know, that God is merciful—*infinitely merciful*. Were He not so, you and I had, long ere now, been shut up in the prison house of despair, without one ray of hope to enlighten the blackness of darkness. But I know, likewise, that God is true, as well as merciful, and that His mercy can never be exercised in such a manner as to destroy His truth. His mercy, infinite though it be, cannot be exercised towards those who put away from them “the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col 1:5); for this would be to falsify His own express declaration. His mercy is now exhibited to you in His Word. His mercy has provided an atonement³ for sin, by which you may *now* be saved! His mercy is setting before you this atonement as the ground of hope. But if you “neglect so great salvation” (Heb 2:3), then when the axe is laid to the root of the tree and you are cut down, His mercy—so far as you are concerned—will forever cease. You will be left to experience the fearful effect of mercy despised and justice executed. Do you inquire, “What must I do to be saved?” (Act 16:30). Blessed be God, the answer is at hand: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31)...The Lord hath Himself provided a Lamb for an offering. He “hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa 53:5). “Behold,” therefore, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). Come unto the Father, through the Son, and you will in no wise be cast out (Joh 6:37).

The [only] work by which you can be saved has been already accomplished! Jesus hath finished transgression, made an end of sins, and brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24)! He hath opened up the way of access for you to the mercy seat of God; and now you may behold the God Whom you have offended sitting on that mercy seat, dispensing pardon and life. You may hear His gracious voice [calling]—yea, beseeching and entreating you to come unto Him that your soul may live (Mat 11:28-30).

Cast your soul, all guilty as it is, on the finished work of Immanuel (Isa 7:14), and you will not be rejected. Think not that you have something to do in order to commend yourself to His favor, before you can believe on “him that justifieth⁴ the

³ See FGB 227, *Atonement*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ **justifieth** – declares righteous; “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and

ungodly” (Rom 4:5). Make no attempt to render yourself worthy of acceptance. Bring no price in your hand. God will not make merchandise of the blessings of salvation. He will give eternal life freely, as God; or He will not give it at all. And you must receive it freely, as a sinner guilty and condemned, having no claim upon God; or you will not receive it at all. Are not these His own gracious words? “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa 55:1). Inquire no longer, then, “Wherewith shall I come before the LORD” (Mic 6:6), for “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:8-10).

From *Three Lectures to Christian Mothers*.



The mother of Jesus had a very firm and practical faith in her Son, concerning whom angels and prophets had borne witness to her. She had seen Him in His infancy and watched Him as a child; and it could not have been easy to believe in the divinity of one whom you have held as an infant to be nourished at your breast. From His marvelous birth, she believed in Him.—*Charles Spurgeon*

I remember [Augustine] writes of his mother Monica that she planted the precepts of life in his mind by her words, watered them with her tears, and nourished them with her example. A precious pattern for all mothers.—*John Flavel*

CHURCH AND MOTHERHOOD

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

THE Church of God in Scripture is called a mother. What is a mother's business? What is a mother's duty? A mother's duty is to feed her own child from her own bosom. She loses a joy herself and inflicts a serious injury upon her offspring when, if having the ability, she lacks the affection that would constrain her to support her own child from the fountains that God Himself hath opened. And as the Church of Christ is a mother, she shall lack the greatest joy and lose the sweetest privilege, unless she herself trains her own children and gives them the unadulterated milk of the Word.¹ She has no right to put her children out to nurse. How shall they love her? What affection shall they bear towards her?...It is a mother's business as that child grows up to train and teach it. Let her teach it the first letters of the alphabet; let it gather its first knowledge of Christ from a mother's lips. Who so fit to teach as she that brought it forth? None can teach so sweetly and none so effectually as she. Let her not give up the training of her child to another. And why should we, the Church of Christ, give up our children when we first taught them to speak in Christ's name, to be trained and to be taught by others? No, by every motherly feeling that remains within the bosom of Christ's Church, let us see her children brought up at her own knees, dandled there in her own lap, and not give up the work of training her sons and daughters to others. And who so fit as the mother of the family to inspire her son with holy ardor, when at last he goes forward to the battle of life? Who shall give him the affectionate advice? Who shall give him the cheering word that shall sustain him in the hour of difficulty, so well as a mother whom he loves? And let the Church of God, when her young men go forth to her battles, put her hand upon their shoulders and say, "Be strong, young man, be strong; dishonor not the mother that bare you; but go forth and, like the son of a Spartan mother, return not but in glory...Come back on your shield or with it—a hero or a martyr." Who can speak the words so well and sing at home so powerfully, as the mother to her son or the Church to her child? The Church, then, has no right to delegate to another her own work. Let her bring forth her own children; let her give them nourishment; let her train them up; let her send them forth to do the Master's work.



¹ Spurgeon is primarily speaking of the local church training its men for gospel ministry; but he also includes general principles that apply to all the members of a church as well.