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CHAPTER 1. THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN – AN ADDRESS TO PARENTS

MY DEAR FRIENDS, I feel a special interest in addressing you on the present occasion; a sort of family feeling resulting from a community of interests which is always inspiring. I have sometimes thought, when I have heard men talking to women on their duties as wives and mothers, their trials and difficulties, and so on, "Ah, it is all very good, but you don't know much about it, after all." Now, I do not come to speak to you tonight under this disadvantage, at any rate. I do know something of the things of which I speak; having had a large and young family, I have had some experience of the anxiety, toil, and difficulty required in the training and management of young children. It is because I am so well acquainted with the weight of the trials and duties of maternity that I sympathise so deeply with mothers, and would fain help to lighten their burdens by a little practical advice and instruction.

I presume that all here are agreed as to the responsibility devolving on parents to give some sort of training to their children. There is not a mother here who would think it right to leave her child to grow up without discipline or training of some kind! Then the question for us to consider is, What sort of training does God, and our duty to our children, require from us? In order to get at the answer to this question, the first important matter for a parent to settle in her own mind, is this: To whom does this child belong?

IS IT MINE, OR IS IT THE LORD'S? Surely, this question should not need any discussion, at least by Christian parents! For do we not recognise, even before they are born, that they are peculiarly and exclusively a heritage from the Lord; and when they came into the world, the first effort we put forth was to hold them up and offer them to Him? And again, in their Christening we acknowledged that they belonged to Him, and promised to train them for His glory. Now the keeping of this one fact before the mind of a mother will be the best guiding principle in training; and it is because Christian parents so often forget whose their children are, that they make such mistakes in training them. I say then to you mothers here, settle it in your minds that your child belongs absolutely to God, and not to you—that you are only stewards for God, holding your children to nurse them and train them for Him.

This responsibility arises, 1st.—Out of the command and ordination of God. Both under the old and new dispensations, the Lord has, in the most emphatic and solemn manner, laid the obligation on



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parents to train their children for Him; He commands it, to whom both parents and children exclusively belong.

Secondly.—This responsibility arises out of the nature of the relationship between parent and child. The parent is in the most complete sense the owner, the guardian, the director, and controller of the child; its utter helplessness and ignorance when it first comes into the world throws it completely under the power, of, and at the discretion of, its parents. The poor little infant has no choice but to be led as its parents lead it—no option but to be directed, trained, and developed physically, mentally, and spiritually as its parents develop it; and it is during these early stages of helplessness and ignorance that the impetus is generally given to its future life. There is an old adage, that "They who rock the cradle rule the world," and they certainly do; but I am afraid that the world has been very badly ruled, just because those who rock the cradle have not known how to train the child. Napoleon once said, that "the great want of France was mothers;" and I am afraid we may say to a greater extent than ever before in our history, that the great want of England is mothers—right-minded, able, competent, Christian mothers, who realise their responsibility to God and to their children, and who are resolved at all costs and sacrifices to discharge it.

Thirdly.—This responsibility arises out of our ability for the task. We are able to train our children in the way they should go, or God would not have enjoined it upon us. He required every father and mother in Israel to train their children for Him. He admitted of no exception, no excuse; and in the New Testament it is assumed as a first duty with believers to train up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The training God requires is a moral training—THE INSPIRING OF THE CHILD WITH THE LOVE OF GOODNESS, TRUTH, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, and leading him to its practice and exercise in all the duties and emergencies of life,

Now, any parent, however poor, unlearned, or occupied, can do this, if only she has the grace of God in her heart, and will take the TROUBLE. Training a child in the way he should go does not necessarily imply a scholastic training. All parents have not the power to educate their children, nor to do much for them temporally as they cannot put them in a position to get much of this world's goods, but these things are not included in right training. A child may be trained for the highest moral and spiritual development without these; and, where there is natural ability, for the highest mental development also. This is abundantly established in the histories of some of our great men. We know what kind of homes some of them were trained in, what humble parentage some of them had, what little learning they had in their early days, but, nevertheless, they were trained in the way



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they should go, and having been set going in the right path, when they came to mature years they did not fail to help themselves. No poor parent need be discouraged because he cannot educate his children in the popular sense.

God does not require of us more than we can do, and if we train our children, as far as is possible to us, in the way they should go, they will then go in that way for themselves; God's providence and spirit and their own bias will guide them on and on, as it has done many a son of poor parents, to prosperity, usefulness and honour in this world, as well as to eternal glory in the next.

But, Fourthly—This responsibility is increased by the opportunity which parents possess, and especially mothers, to train their children. Being thrown constantly with them, having them continually under our eye by night and by day, when no one else is there, being acquainted with all their peculiarities of disposition, and entering into all their joys and sorrows, what splendid opportunities occur daily for pruning, correcting, inspiring, leading, and encouraging them, as the case may require.

Then, Fifthly—What an awful responsibility arises out of the influence which God has given us over our children. This influence is IRRESISTIBLE until parents by their own injudicious conduct fritter it away. A little child who has been rightly trained has unbounded, unquestioning, confidence in its parents; what father or mother says, is to it, an end of all controversy, it never seeks for further proof. This influence wisely used will never wear out, but will spread like an atmosphere around the child's moral nature, moulding and fashioning all his future life. I sometimes meet with parents who tell me that at the age of sixteen or seventeen, their children have become quite unmanageable, and that they have lost all their influence over them. I cannot tell you which I pity most, such children, or such parents. One of the worst signs of our times is the little respect which children seem to have for their parents. There are numbers of boys and girls of from twelve to seventeen years of age, over whom their parents have little or no control. But how has this come to pass? Did these children leap all at once from the restraints and barriers of parental affection and authority? Oh no, it has been the result of the imperceptible growth of years of insubordination and want of proper discipline—the gradual loss of parental influence until they have thrown it off altogether, and resolved to do as they please. Hence the terrible exhibitions we have of youthful depravity, lawlessness, and rebellion. Well, I think I hear some mother say: I see, I feel my responsibility, and I long to train my children in the way they should go, but



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How am I to do it?

First let us look at the meaning of the word Train. It does not mean merely to teach. Some parents seem to have the notion that all they have to do in training their children aright is to teach them; so they cram them with religious sentiment and truth, making them commit to memory the Catechism, large portions of Scripture, a great many hymns, and so on. All very good as far as it goes, but which may all be done without a single stroke of real training such as God requires, and such as the hearts of our children need. Nay, this mere teaching, informing the head without interesting or influencing the heart, frequently drives children off from God and goodness, and makes them hate, instead of love, everything connected with religion. In the early part of my married life, when my dear husband was travelling very much from place to place, I was frequently thrown into the houses of leading families in churches for three or four weeks at a time, and I used to say to myself, 'How is it that these children seem frequently to have a more inveterate dislike for religion and religious things, than the children of worldly people who make no profession?' Subsequent observations and experience have shown me the reason. It is because such parents inform the head without training the heart. They teach what they neither practice themselves nor take the trouble to see that their children practice, and the children see through the hollow sham, and learn to despise both their parents and their religion. Mother, if you want to TRAIN your child you must practice what you teach, and YOU must SHOW him how to practice it also, and you must, at all costs of trouble and care, see that he DOES it.

Suppose, by way of illustration, that you have a vine, and that this vine is endowed with reason, and will, and moral sense. You say to your vine-dresser, 'Now, I want that vine trained,'—i.e., made to grow in a particular way, so that it may bear the largest amount of fruit possible to it. Suppose your vinedresser goes to your vine every morning, and says to it, 'Now, you must let that branch grow in this direction, and that branch grow in another; you are not to put forth too many shoots here, nor too many tendrils there; you must not waste your sap in too many leaves;' and having told it what to do and how to grow, he shuts it up and leaves it to itself. This is precisely the way many good people act towards their children. But lo! the vine grows as it likes; nature is too strong for mere theory; words will not curb its exuberance, nor check its waywardness. Your vine-dresser must do something more effectual than talking. He must nail that branch where he wishes it to grow; he must cut away what he sees to be superfluous; he must lop, and prune, and dress it, if it is to be trained for beauty and for fruitfulness. And just so, mother, if you want your child to be trained for God and righteousness you must prune, and curb, and propel, and lead it in the way in which it should go. But some mother says, 'What a deal of trouble!' Ah, that is just why many parents fail; they are afraid of



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trouble; but, as Mrs. Stowe says, 'If you will not take the trouble to train Charlie when he is a little boy, he will give you a great deal more trouble when he is a big one.' Many a foolish mother, to spare herself trouble, has left her children to themselves, and "a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame!" Many parents teach their children in theory the right way, but by their negligence and indifference, train them in just the opposite. See that mother seated at some important piece of work which she is anxious to finish; her three little children are playing around her—one with his picture book, another with his horse and cart, and baby with her doll. It is Monday afternoon, and only yesterday she was giving those children a lesson on the importance of love and good-will amongst themselves; that was the teaching, now comes the training. Presently Charlie gets tired of his pictures, and, without asking permission, takes the horse and cart from his younger brother, whereupon there is a scream, and presently a fight. Instead of laying aside her work, restoring the rightful property, explaining to Charlie that it is unjust and unkind to take his brother's toys, and to the younger one that he should rather suffer wrong than scream and fight, she goes on with her work, telling Charlie that he is a very naughty boy, and making the very common remark that she thinks there never were such troublesome children as hers! Now, who cannot see the different effect it would have had on these children if that mother had taken the trouble to make them realise and confess their fault, and voluntarily exchange the kiss of reconciliation and brotherly affection? What if it had taken half an hour of her precious time, would not the gain be greater than that which would accrue from any other occupation, however important? Mothers, if you want your children to walk in the way they should go, you must not only teach, you must be at the trouble to TRAIN.

But, Secondly, How IS THIS TRAINING TO BE GIVEN?

The first and most important point is to secure OBEDIENCE. Obedience to properly constituted authority is the foundation of all moral excellence, not only in childhood, but all the way through life. And the secret of a great deal of the lawlessness of these times, both towards God and man, is that, when children, these people were never taught to submit to the authority of their parents; and now you may convince them ever so clearly that it is their duty, and would be their happiness, to submit to God, but their unrestrained, unsubdued wills have never been accustomed to submit to anybody, and it is like beginning to break in a wild horse in old age. Well may the Prophet enquire, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." God has laid it on parents to begin the work of bringing the will into subjection in childhood; and to help us in doing it, He has put in all children a tendency to obey. Watch any young child, and you will find that, as a rule, his instincts lead him to submit; insubordination is the



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exception, until this tendency has been trifled with by those who have the care of him. Now, how important it is, in right training, to take advantage of this tendency to obedience, and not on any account allow it to be weakened by encouraging exceptional rebellion! In order to do this, you must begin EARLY ENOUGH. This is where multitudes of mothers miss their mark; they begin too late. The great majority of children are ruined for the formation of character before they are five years old by the foolish indulgence of mothers.

I am sometimes asked, 'What do you consider the secret of successful training'? I answer, 'BEGINNING SOON ENOUGH - not letting Satan get the advantage of us at the start.' That is the secret of success. 'Well, but,' mothers say, 'it is so hard to chastise an infant.' There is seldom need for chastisement where mothers begin early and wisely. There is a way of speaking to and handling an infant compatible with the utmost love and tenderness, which teaches it that mother is not to be trifled with; that, although she loves and caresses, she is to be obeyed, and will be obeyed, and a child that is trained in this way will not, as a rule, attempt to resist. In exceptional cases it may be tempted to become obstreperous, and then the mother must show her authority. Take an illustration. We will suppose that your son of six months old is in a fractious mood, and indisposed to take his morning nap; his nurse has put him in his cot and struggled with him till she is tired, and the child is tired too; at last you come and take the baby, after he has been rolling and tumbling about, and lay him down with a firm hand, saying with a firm voice, 'Baby must lie still and go to sleep,' putting your hand on him at the same time to prevent his rising in the cot or turning over after you have spoken. Now, if this child for the previous three months has been trained in This line, if this is not the beginning, he will, as a natural consequence, lie still and go to sleep; but if he has not been accustomed to this kind of handling, he will perhaps become boisterous and resist you; if so, you must persevere. You must on no account give up; no, not if you stop till night. If he conquers you this time he will try harder next, and it will get more and more difficult. Almost all mothers mistake here; they give up because they will not inflict on themselves the pain of a struggle, forgetting that defeat now only ensures endless battles in the future.

Remember you MUST conquer in the FIRST battle, whatever it may be about, or you are undone. 'Ah, but what time and patience this requires!' Yes, but it is only for once or twice; and what is that compared with the time and toil of conquering further on? But you say, 'It is so hard.' Not half so hard as the other way; for when the child finds that mother is not to be got over, he will yield as a matter of course. I have proved it, I think, with some as strong-willed children as ever came into the world. I conquered them at six and ten months old, and seldom had to contend with any direct



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opposition after. I have a son who is now preaching the Gospel, and a great joy to my heart. The only decided battle I ever fought with him was at ten months old. I do not say that he never disobeyed me afterwards—he sometimes forgot himself and was disobedient—but I do say that I never remember him setting his will in direct antagonism to mine in all the succeeding years of his childhood. It was a painful struggle—that first contest, but has not the result paid for it a thousand thousand times? Oh, mothers, if you love your children, begin early to exact obedience. If chastisement be necessary, inflict it; and for every pang you suffer, every tear you shed, you shall reap comfort, honour, and glory. But, perhaps, there are some mothers who are saying, 'Ah, I see it now; but it is too late; my children are too old.' I say: better late than never. Begin and do all you can. Perhaps you can never undo ALL the mischief, but you may a part of it. Call your children around you; confess your past unfaithfulness in your dealings with them, fall on your knees before the Lord with them, and tell Him of your failure to train them for Him, and ask His help to enable you to do it in the future. When you rise from your knees tell your children in the most solemn manner that you see your mistake, and feel, how awful it would be, if they were to be lost through your fault, and that from this hour you are going to be obeyed in everything. Begin at once to exact obedience. Be judicious and forbearing, remembering that your children's habits of disobedience are the result of your own folly, and deal as gently as the case will permit; but at all costs secure obedience, and never more allow your commands to be trifled with. Now is your only chance; a few more years, and your child is undone.

Do not be afraid to use your authority. One would think, to hear some parents talk of their relations with their children, that they did not possess an iota of power over them. All they dare to do, seems to be to reason, to persuade, to coax. I have frequently heard mothers using all manner of persuasion instead of exerting the authority which God has given for the safeguard and guidance of their poor children.

They give their commands in such a voice as leaves it optional whether the child shall obey them or not, and this he understands very well; there is no command, no firmness, no decision, no authority, and the child knows it by its instincts just as an animal would. Men are much wiser in breaking in and training their horses than their sons, hence they generally get much better served by the former than the latter!

What has God given you authority for, if He did not intend you to use it—if your child can do as well without it? He has sent your child to you to be guided and restrained by your authority, as much as to be inspired and encouraged by your love. How will you answer for the neglect or abuse of this



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wonderful power? You recollect the fearful punishment that came upon Eli, one of the most terrible strokes of vengeance recorded in the whole Bible. What was it for? Not for using profane language before his children, not for training them in unrighteousness or immorality, for he was a good and righteous man, but I because he restrained them not: 'that means he did not use his authority on the side of God and righteousness. Doubtless, this had been his failing all the way through; he had indulged his sons in their own way, until at last they set both him and his God at open defiance. Alas! This has been the case with millions since his day: having sown the wind they have reaped the whirlwind. What a contrast the conduct and fate of Eli present in this respect to the conduct of Abraham! "I know him," said Jehovah, "that he will command his children and his household after him." Not merely remonstrate, persuade, and threaten, as Eli did, but "command"—he will use his authority on My side; and, as a consequence, the Lord promised that they should "keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Parents, if you fulfil your part of the covenant, never fear but that God will perform His. Only you train your children truly for Him, and He will charge Himself with their future; but do not expect, if you neglect your sacred trust, or abuse it by training them in the nurture and admonition of the world and the Devil, that God will work a miracle to convert them when they come to mature years, because you cry and pray and ask Him to do so. He makes no such promise; and we see, alas! in the experience of multitudes of sorrowing parents, that He does not hold Himself bound to work for the salvation of their children on any such conditions.

Another important point in training a child in the way he should go is to train it in the practice of TRUTH AND INTEGRITY. Human nature is said to go "astray from the womb-speaking lies;" and, doubtless, untruthfulness is one of the most easily besetting and prevalent sins of our race. To counteract this tendency, and to establish the soul in habits of truth and sincerity, must be one of the first objects of right training. In order to do this, parents should beware of palliating or excusing the tendency to falsehood in their children. In nothing have I been more amazed than in this. I have actually seen mothers smile at, and almost extol the little artifices of their children in their attempts to deceive them and to hide some childish delinquency. No wonder that such parents fail to inspire their offspring with that wholesome dread of falseness which is one of the greatest safeguards to virtue in after life.

No mother will succeed in begetting in her child a greater antipathy towards any sin than she feels for it herself. Children are the quickest of all analysts, and instinctively detect in a moment all affectation of goodness. They judge not so much from what we say as HOW WE FEEL. They are not influenced so much by our teaching as by our spirit and example. For instance, a mother teaches her



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child that he is to be truthful, and on no account to tell a lie; but what effect will such teaching have if he hears her tell one, or sees her act one, the next day? Parents teach their children to be sincere, and take occasion to point out examples of the meanness and wickedness of deception, but by their own example they very frequently train them in the grossest insincerity. Take an illustration. A person calls to see you whose society your child knows that you neither esteem nor desire, but you are all smiles and compliments, pressing her to come again, and assuring her that her visit has given you very great pleasure. What more effectual lesson could you give your wondering little one in deception and double-dealing than this?

And yet how common is this kind of thing in many households? I once stayed in the house of a lady who had a fine promising boy of about eighteen months old. He used to kick and scream violently when he found that she was going out of the house. This, of course, was the result of previous bad training. But what did she do? Instead of facing the difficulty, and in a calm, firm, and affectionate manner curing her little son of this bad habit, she used to promise every time that she would bring him a pony that he could ride on, and the little fellow believed and believed until he got tired, and then put down his mother, in his baby-mind, as a liar. Of course he would not have understood such a definition, but the deception would be burned into his soul never to be eradicated. A child hurts himself against the table: the mother strikes it, and says, "Oh! naughty table! you have hurt baby;" but the child soon learns that the table was not to blame, and at the same time learns to distrust his mother, who said it was.

A mother invites some little friends to spend an afternoon with her children, during which games are played requiring skill and tact in the winner. Her little boy wins several of the games, and although his brother or one of his little friends says that he was not fair—that is, that he cheated—she does not appear to notice it, but contents herself by saying, 'Oh, you must be good children and not quarrel;' thus inflicting an unjust reflection on the child of honour and integrity, while encouraging the other in the meanest and most selfish form of sin—allowing him to rejoice over the victory won, through fraud or sleight-of-hand. Can such a mother wonder if her boy turns out a thief or a gambler? Well, but you say how unpleasant it would be in such a case to go into particular investigation, spoil the enjoyment of the party, and expose your child as a cheat before them! Certainly it would be very unpleasant, and to a mother who is more concerned about her son appearing to be a cheat than she is about his being one the result would not be worth the fuss; but, to a mother who esteems the honour and integrity of her boy more than all appearances or opinions in the world, such an opportunity of correcting his fault and fortifying him against future temptation is more than the



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breaking up of a dozen parties. Oh, how many a promising child has been ruined because his mother would not endure the pain and trouble of an investigation? "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." Neither does such a course win the good opinion of others. The children go away feeling that your son is a cheat just the same; and, what is worse, feeling that you are a party to his wickedness.

Again, Charlie is ill, and it is needful for him to take a dose of unpleasant medicine; but he has been so badly trained that his mother knows he will not take it if she tells him it is nasty. So she resorts to stratagem, and tells him that she has got something good, and thus coaxes him to take it into his mouth, but before it is swallowed he detects the cheat, and medicine and mother's veracity are spit out together. In this way thousands of children are taught deception and untruth, and you may labour in vain in after years to make them truthful and sincere—the soil has been ruined by early abuse.

Mothers, if you want your child to be truthful and sincere you must not only teach it to be so, you must be so yourself, and see that your child practices what you teach. You must not wink at, or cover up any kind of falseness or deception in him, because he is yours. Sin should be the more awful to you because you see it in those so dear, and those for whom you are responsible. If you have any reason to suspect your child of insincerity or falsehood, do not rest until you have bottomed the matter; never mind what trouble or pain it involves, drag it out, even though it should bring for the time exposure and disgrace. This may prove a useful chastisement, and a warning in the future. Anything is preferable to sin covered up, and consequently encouraged. Resolve that you will make your child truthful and sincere, if you can do it no other way, from very despair of being able to hide anything from you. God acts on this principle with adults: why should not we with our children? "Be sure your sin will find you out."

I know some children amongst whom it is a common remark, 'It is of no use trying to hide anything from mamma, for she is sure to find it out; so it is best to tell her at once.' How much misery it would save if it were thus in every family! Mothers, take the trouble to make your children TRUE, and God will enable you to do it. If you work for Him with your children, He will work with you in them, and you shall have the joy of seeing them grow up into Christ, their living Head in all things.

But further. To train a child in the way it should go, we must not stop with those qualities and virtues which bear on man; but it must be trained in the exercise of devotion and piety towards God. Of



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course, none but truly Christian_ parents are equal to impart this kind of training. The Holy Ghost most needs to be in the heart of the mother who undertakes to lead her child to God. The bias to evil is too strong to be turned aside by unassisted human wisdom or strength, however great. But, bless God! there is every encouragement to those parents who are truly His, to hope for success in training their children for Him.

And, perhaps, the first important point in such effort is, to lead our children to regard themselves as standing in a special relationship to God. "The promise is to you and to your children."

And there is a sense in which the children of believers are already set apart for Him. Many parents seem to lose sight of this covenant relation, and bring up their children under the idea that they must need to live in sin till they come to be fifteen or sixteen years old, and then they hope God will convert them in the same marvelous and sudden manner in which drunkards and profligates are converted. Now, I am as firm a believer in conversion as anyone can be; and I also believe that the children of believers need to be converted as much as others, but I say this is not the way to teach our children to expect it. What is conversion but the renewal of the mind by the Holy Ghost through faith in a crucified Saviour? And as there are "diversities of operations by the same spirit," why may not the minds of children be renewed very early? Why may they not be led to choose Christ and His yoke at seven or eight years old as well as at seventeen? If the will of a child be sincerely yielded to God, cannot the blessed Spirit as easily and as effectually renew and actuate its heart and affections as those of an adult? And does not Jesus say "SUFFER the little ones to come unto Me?" Alas! How many Christian parents unwittingly forbid them?

Because in the case of those who have had no previous light or training, conversion is necessarily sudden and followed by a great outward change, is that any reason why in the case of a child carefully trained in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord," the Holy Spirit should not work together with such training, adapting his operations to the capacity and requirements of the little ones who are already "of the kingdom of heaven?" thus gradually installing them in all the privileges, duties, and enjoyments of that kingdom. Of what advantage would it be to train them in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord," if He did not purpose to bless this training to their conversion and salvation? The very terms of this injunction show the sense in which the Holy Spirit uses them. "Nurture" means "nursing, feeding, strengthening, developing." "Admonition" means "reproof, caution, instruction." Here is the order of God, firstly, the feeding and strengthening of all that is good in them; and secondly, the reproof and caution against evil; and thirdly, instruction in



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righteousness. If parents would only take the Lord's way, they would see their sons and their daughters taking their places in the temple of the Lord, as their natural and abiding home. Wisely and faithfully trained up for God, they would say, when solicited to go away, "To whom shall we go?" 'Ah,' says some mother, 'it is very easy to talk, but you don't know the natural antipathy which my children have to religion. I am sure I have tried to teach them the right way, and to make them love that which is good, but, so far, I see very little result of my labours.' Perhaps, my friend, the failure has been in that you have taught but have not trained. You have told them the way to take, but have not led them in it. If you are to succeed you must do both, and that continually.

Of course right training includes right teaching, for though there may be much teaching without training, there cannot be good training without teaching. Doubtless many parents and teachers fail here for want of tact and wisdom in their methods of instruction.

The one great rule to be observed in all teaching is to make your lessons INTERESTING. If you cannot awaken the interest of your child you had better give up, and school and inform yourself till you can. Have not a doubt that many an impetuous, earnest, high-spirited child is driven to hate the Bible, the Sanctuary, and religious exercises in general, by the cold, spiritless, insipid, canting manner in which he hears them read and performed. He knows by instinct that this is not the way people go through things in which their hearts are deeply concerned. He hears father and mother and friends talk in a natural, easy, interesting manner on business and family matters, and consequently he listens with interest, but the moment they begin with religion he feels there is no heart in it, he feels that it is because they MUST, and not because they LIKE. He is taught to sing "Happy, happy Sunday, the brightest of the seven." But he knows that in his home it is the dullest day of the week, and that the whole household are relieved when it is passed and they are able to be back at this world's employments and enjoyments.

Now, if you want your child to love and enjoy the Sabbath you must make it the Most INTERESTING day of the week. If you want him to love and read his Bible you must so tell him its stories, and elucidate its lessons as to make it INTEREST him. If you want him to love prayer you must so pray as to interest and draw out his mind and heart with your own, and teach him to go to God, as he comes to you, in his own natural voice and manner to tell Him his wants and to express his joys or sorrows. The themes of religion are of all themes most interesting to children when dealt with naturally and interestingly.



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I used to take my eldest boy on my knee from the time when he was about two years old and tell him the stories of the Old Testament in baby language and adapted to baby comprehension, one at a time, so that he thoroughly drank them in and also the moral lessons they were calculated to convey. When between three and four years old I remember once going into the nursery and finding him mounted on his rocking horse, in a high state of excitement, finishing the story of Joseph to his nurse and baby brother, showing them how Joseph galloped on his live "gee gee" when he went to fetch his father to show him to Pharaoh. In the same way we subsequently went through the history of the flood, having a Noah's Ark, which was kept for Sabbath use; making the Ark itself the foundation of one lesson, Noah and his family of another, and the gathering of the animals of a third, and so on until the subject was exhausted.

When my family increased, it was my custom before these Sabbath lessons to have a short lively tune. A short prayer, in which I let them all repeat after me, sentence by sentence, asking the Lord to help us to understand His word, and to bless our souls, and so on. After the lesson another short prayer, and then another tune or two. After this they would adjourn to the nursery, where frequently they would go through the whole service again, the eldest being the preacher. When baby was asleep their nurse would read interesting infantile stories to the elder ones, or teach them suitable bits of poetry by letting them all repeat it together after her. Thus the Sabbath was made a day of pleasure as well as of instruction and improvement. I never allowed my children to attend public services till they were old enough to take some interest in them. We had no mission services then, or they would have been able to understand, and enter into a great part of them, but I deemed it an evil to make a child sit still for an hour-and-a-half, dangling its legs on a high seat, listening to what it could neither understand nor appreciate, for alas, there is little in the ordinary services of our day to interest or profit children, and I am satisfied that a great deal of the distaste for religious services so common amongst them has been engendered in this way. My experience has been that my children have come so highly to appreciate the privilege of attending service, that a promise of it during the week would insure extra good behaviour and diligence.

Of course, mothers who have no one to leave with their children cannot always stay at home, and must take them as often as is necessary for their own edification. To those parents who are able to keep servants, I would say, make any sacrifice to keep a really good Christian girl with your children. I have made it a rule never to have any other as a nurse, and have sometimes put up with great inexperience and incompetency, because it was associated with goodness. Better take a girl whom you have to teach how to wash a child's face, or to stitch a button on, if she is true and sincere, than



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have one ever so clever who will teach your children to lie and deceive.

But to return to the subject of teaching. Not only must you make your teaching interesting, but also practical, in the highest degree. Your children want to know how to comport themselves now in the little duties, trials, and enjoyments of their daily life. It is to be feared that, as with adults so with children, a deal of so-called teaching is right away above their heads, dealing with abstract truths and far-off illustrations, instead of coming down to such every-day matters as obedience to parents and teachers; the learning of their lessons; their treatment of brothers, sisters, and servants; their companionships; their amusements; the spending and giving of their pocketmoney; their dealings with the poor; their treatment of animals—in short, everything embraced in their daily life. The great end of Christian training is to lead children to realise the fact that they BELONG TO GOD, and are under a solemn obligation to do everything in a way which they think will please Him. Parents cannot begin too early, nor labour too continuously, to keep this fact before the minds of their children. In the family devotion in the morning, the father or mother, or whoever conducts it, should bring the children specially before the Lord, asking Him 'to give them grace this day, to be obedient to those who have the care of them. To be diligent at their lessons, so that they may lay in knowledge, which shall make them useful to their fellow-creatures, and enable them to do something for God and souls, if He sees fit to spare them.'

Above all things, parents should labour to counteract the natural selfishness of the hearts of their children by showing them that they are not to live unto themselves—that they are not to be good, and industrious, and studious, in order that THEY THEMSELVES may be learned, or happy, or successful in the world. For these are the things after which the Gentiles—the unbelieving world—seek; but that they, as belonging to God, are to live unto Him, who hath given Himself for them, seeking first His kingdom and righteousness. Seeking first to glorify Him, and do good to their generation, leaving it with Him to fix the bounds of their habitation, and to choose their inheritance for them. Alas! How few Christian parents seem to understand this first principle of right training—hence their anxiety to push their children on, and up, in the learning, principles, customs, and ambitions of this world. Surely "God is not mocked," for as they "sow to the flesh," they "of the flesh reap corruption;" and alas! Their poor children's SOULS are sacrificed in the bargain.

Oh, mothers, don't be deceived if you want your children to be the Lord's when they grow up, if you want your boy to withstand the unknown temptations of the future—if you want him to come out a man of righteous principle, integrity, and honour—superior to all the doubleness, chicanery, and



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devilry of the world, you must train him to look upon all the world's prizes as dross compared with the joy of a pure, conscience and a life of usefulness to his fellow-men. If you want your daughter to be a true woman, willing to sacrifice and to suffer in the interests of humanity and truth, you must inspire her Now with a contempt for the baubles for which so many women barter their lives and their souls—you must teach her that she is an independent, responsible being, whom God will call to as severe a reckoning for the use or abuse of her talents as that of her brother man. Day by day, as it flies, you must labour to wake up your children's souls to the realisation of the fact that they belong to God, and that He has sent them into the world, not to look after their own little petty, personal interests, but to devote themselves to the promotion of His! and that, in doing this, they will find happiness, usefulness, and glory. Matt. 25:14-16.

I would like, in conclusion, to add a few cautions against evils which I have seen to be very common in families, and which I believe exert a very baneful influence on the formation of character. First amongst these is an INORDINATE ESTIMATE OF THE VALUE OF MONEY. One would think from the meanness and the discomfort of the ordering of many families, that money was the household god at whose shrine every consideration of comfort, health, friendship and benevolence had been sacrificed. 'What will it cost?'—is the first question that meets every suggestion of improvement in any direction, and this frequently, not because money is scarce, but simply because it cannot be parted with!

Now children soon find out the ruling principle in the family administration, and if they see. it to be covetousness, or avariciousness, parents may teach all the catalogue of Christian virtues from morning till night, but their children will grow up selfish in the very core of their souls. Like begets like the world over, and you show me a household where the spirit of covetousness reigns, and I will show you ungenerous, cunning children. "The LOVE OF MONEY is the root of all' evil" is an axiom as true as it is neglected, and until parents, by their actions, show their children that they deem domestic comfort and religion, the claims of Christian hospitality, the blood and lives of their servants, the claims of the suffering and the destitute, and the crying need of the benighted multitude, of more importance than the HOARDING OF MONEY, they must go on reaping the reward of their covetousness in the selfish indulgence, ungrateful neglect, and open profligacy of their children. Ah, how many a parent, who has sacrificed all the higher and nobler impulses of his own and his children's natures to money-making, has had it scattered by thousands by wicked, selfish sons?



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Another great evil which I have seen even in families where there has in the main been much good training, is the yielding in an emergency on points of principle for the sake of expediency. Take an illustration. Here is a family who are trained in the principles of abstinence from intoxicating drinks, as all Christian families undoubtedly ought to be. These parents have wisely taught their children that strong drink is an evil and bitter thing, and that all traffic and countenance of it brings a curse; but on a certain day, a letter comes announcing that General So-and-so, or Captain Somebody is coming to pay a visit to his cousin, on his return from India. Of course there is much excitement and expectation among the junior members of the family, and a becoming anxiety on the part of the parents, worthily to entertain their guest, but a difficulty presents itself. The General is not an abstainer, he has always been accustomed to his wine and spirits. 'What shall we do,' says the mother, 'he will think it inhospitable and mean to deny him his favourite beverage'? 'Well, yes,' says the father, 'I don't see how we can do it in this instance; you see he is an old man, and would not appreciate our views or our motives. I fear we shall have to order a little wine for him. I don't like to bring it in sight of the children, but we must explain the circumstances to them, and we will hope no harm will come of it.' These parents sacrifice principle to expediency, and admit the mocker to their family circle. Can they be surprised if one of their sons turns out a drunkard? 'Ah!' said a broken-hearted father once to my husband 'I trained my boy in abstinence principles, but I did not keep him out of the society of those who thought there was no harm in moderate drinking, and now he is an outcast and an alien whom I cannot allow to cross my threshold. He has killed his mother, and will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.' "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works" or instruments, "of darkness" of evil. "Wine is a mocker." WINE ITSELF, not the abuse of it. Here is the secret why go many thousands of the fair and promising fall by it. Christian parents, fear it as you would the bite of a serpent, and as you value the souls of your children keep it out of their very sight.

Another great enemy to the formation of righteous character is ambition for what is called position in society! Some parents are continually putting before their children future aggrandisement and fortune, as a stimulus to industry and effort, thus holding up to their young minds this world's prosperity and applause as the great aim and object of life. To get to be more learned, more genteel, more wealthy than men of their own class, so that they may be received into higher circles of worldly society. Such parents often fail, and in the attempt to leap the chasm which bars his upward course, many a son falls headlong through the abyss of disappointed ambition, down to damnation, and many a daughter to that path, the steps of which "take hold on hell." Ah, but some succeed! Yes, and what reward do the parents often get? The son and daughter, whom they toiled and struggled so hard to push up, get so high, they can scarcely see the poor, neglected parents



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down below, and often leave them to die in poverty, and with a broken heart. Truly "Godliness with contentment is Great Gain."

I cannot close these remarks without lifting up my voice against the practice now so prevalent amongst respectable families, of sending children to boarding schools before their principles are formed or their characters developed. Parents are led away by the professedly religious character of schools, forgetting that, even supposing the master or governess may be all that can be desired, a school is a little world where all the elements of unrenewed human nature are at work with as great variety, subtlety, and power as in the great world outside. You would shrink from exposing your child to the temptation and danger of association with unconverted worldly men and women, why should you expose them to the influence of children of the same character, who are not infrequently sent to these schools because they have become utterly vitiated and unmanageable at home? I have listened to many a sad story of the consequences of these school associations, and early made up my mind to keep my children under my own influence, at least until they had attained that maturity in grace and principle which would be an effectual safeguard against ungodly associations. To this end I have rejected several very tempting offers in the way of educational advantage, and every day I am increasingly thankful for having been enabled to do so. God has laid on you, parents, the responsibility of training your children, and you cannot possibly delegate that responsibility to another without endangering their highest interests for time and for eternity.

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