

this I will not deny nor underrate the grace of God, nor obstruct his praises; for by the grace of God I am what I am. Though I am vile yet my dear Lord hath been an indulgent God to me, and hath made good his covenant and promises to my soul; and if the Lord should henceforth leave me to myself, and at last cast me into hell, I will justify him. O my soul, who, what art thou, that ever free grace should display itself before thee! What hast thou but what thou hast received? Grace was at the foundation, grace has been in the progress, and grace will be celebrated when the top-stone is brought forth. All this goodness that God hath manifested, O my soul, makes thy sins the more aggravated. Thou art still the greatest of sinners and the least of saints. Give God all the glory, and take thou all the shame to thyself. As God hath dealt bountifully with thee, be more dutiful to him; the more he hath given to thee, the more let thy expenditure be for him, and be prepared for his laying on thee a heavier hand than ever.

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## EPISTLE

### TO THE READER OF

“ADVICE TO AN ONLY CHILD.”



CHRISTIAN READER,

THIS precious pearl of seasonable advice\* providentially put first into my hand, and now into thine, is of great worth, and the rate thereof is enhanced not only by the worthiness of the Author, but by the importance of the subject matter, the manner of handling it, and its great end and design. The Author was a master in Israel, a star of the first magnitude, first placed in

\* This Address was prefixed to a posthumous publication, entitled, “Advice to an only Child,” composed by the Rev. James Creswick, a Nonconformist minister ejected from FRESHWATER, in Hampshire. Mr. C. was a native of Sheffield and, we are told, a man of great abilities, well skilled in the learned languages, and an accurate preacher. He was distinguished for his piety and exemplary patience under a tormenting affliction. He used frequently to say: “Lord, I am thine, and thou canst do me no wrong; I would rather have health of soul in a body full of pain, than health and ease of body in a dis-tempered soul.” He died Feb. 1692, aged 75, at *Beal*, in Yorkshire. The Treatise above mentioned was published by Mr. Heywood.—*Noncon. Mem. vol. ii. p. 266.*

a high elevation, to influence candidates for the ministry and the academical sphere, thence translated by the ministerial function into an ecclesiastical station, where he was a burning and a shining light, till eclipsed with the rest of his ejected brethren, but moved very regularly and profitably in a narrower and obscurer orbit, till at last he disappeared to us, but shines bright in the firmament of glory. A description of his exquisitely painful disorder, (gravel) together with his invincible patience and magnanimity, would make a volume; his personal excellencies as a scholar, as a minister, as a Christian, were beyond the vulgar rate; and it is a pity the world is not blessed with more of his learned labours, polished with his own hand, and squared by this master builder for adorning the house of God. But his modesty concealed something of what our zeal for public good hath here presented to the reader, in its naked dress, as written by his own hand.

As for the matter, it is the doctrine according to godliness, the weighty things of law and gospel—covenanting with God, the life of faith, of holiness as in God's presence, actings of love to God and Christ, universal obedience, circumspect walking, dying daily, repentance, delighting in God and his ways, thankfulness, prayer, &c. You may find in this treatise an excellent Encyclopædia or universal scheme of practical divinity: couched in a few words, in a plain method laid before the eyes of the intelligent reader.

The manner of handling this useful tractate is pleasant and alluring, and adds a peculiar accent and emphasis to it; such a smooth style, such fit and proper similitudes, and delightful allusions, that it will chain the reader's eye to proceed in reading, and may perhaps charm his affections to embrace the contents thereof: "It is as apples of gold in pictures of silver," Prov. xxv. 11; that is, golden apples appearing through network of silver, or pourtrayed on silver tables, very delightful and grateful to the eye; so may these words fitly spoken be to youth: and, "as an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold," so may this wise reprovcr be upon an obedient ear: happy is the teacher who mixeth what is pleasant and useful.

The design, I am sure, is high and noble, to plant grace in young persons, and to produce and feed a nursery of plants of renown, to stock the church and world with a springing-up generation, in the room of old trees transplanted into a better soil; that may fill up vacancies and do God service in after times: amongst the rest of Solomon's sumptuous preparations of costly ornaments for his pleasures, that which he mentions, was not the least: "I made me pools of water, to water where-

with the wood that bringeth forth trees," Eccles. ii. 6; this was an artificial means of nourishing fruit trees, in want of natural showers of rain from the clouds, which sometimes was rare and scant: and it is worth observing, that the word rendered *pools*, is the same as *blessings*, in Hebrew, either because in hot countries they were esteemed great blessings, or because they were filled with rain which is a valuable blessing of God. Such pools, as this small treatise, are signal blessings in themselves; and when they are also seconded with the heavenly dew of divine benediction, what a wood or forest of fruit-bearing trees may we see flourishing within the limits of God's church? It is true, men may do something, yet not all. The best human cultivation bends the trees but to an outward compliance; divine grace alone plants them in Christ, and plants grace in their hearts. The pupil Joash was hopeful whilst his reverend tutor Jehoiada instructed him, 2 Kings xii. 2; but after his death discovered the rottenness of his hypocritical heart. God will demonstrate a vast difference between the efficient cause and the subordinate means; therefore some miscarry under religious education, but some prove well, to encourage parents and masters in their duty: divine benediction with paternal instruction hath done great things. Let Abraham command his children, God undertakes "they shall keep the way of the Lord," Gen. xviii. 19—"The rain also filleth the pools," Psal. lxxxiv. 6. or, *benedictionibus amicietur doctor*;\* the Eternal Majesty will make their pools of water great blessings to men.

Did parents conscientiously instruct their children, they would in God's time discern the blessed effects thereof. Mr. Baxter thinks, religious education would be so blessed by God for conversion, that a public ministry would be chiefly useful for edification. It is true, grace comes not by succession, yet often in succession; the covenant is with the godly and their seed; and surely it is not an insignificant cypher: as God delights to run along the line of the gospel covenant, so he usually blesseth his own institutions with gospel grace: let parents do their duty, and leave their issue to God: our children have souls as well as bodies, both must be cared for, nature enjoins nurture, grace regulates it, God alone makes it efficacious. Corrupt nature leaves children not a whit better than a wild ass's colt, Job xi. 12; a habit of sinning makes them like a wild ass, used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, in her occasion who can turn her away? Jer. ii. 24. Education must be as a guide and bridle, to teach and tame those frolicsome youths: but alas! most parents cast the reins on children's

\* The instructor shall be clothed with blessings.

necks, and leave them to their licentious ways, till at last they get the bits between their teeth, and kick off the rider, and ramble in forbidden paths, till they are impounded in a prison here, and in the dungeon of hell hereafter. Solomon saith, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame," Prov. xxix. 15. Is not crying here better than wailing in eternal torments? Even the heathen Seneca could say, *Disciplina severa firmat ingenia, et apta reddit magnis conatibus*;\* is it not a pity such ingenious youths should be lost for want of instruction and correction? Let parents and governors tremble, lest the blood of relations should lie at their door, and both be tormented for wilful neglects: even heathens had great care of children's education, it was actionable in the law courts among the Romans to neglect this; yea, if the son was profligate, the father was sued, since it was supposed the son's miscarriage was through the father's default: but that might be a mistake. Yet God that sees all things, and whose judgment is always according to truth, will commence a suit against, and condemn the careless parent. Lord, when will parents have as much care of their children's souls as bodies? Yea, express as much tenderness to a child as to a brute! You labour hard to provide for them food and raiment, to put them into callings, that they may live like men in the world; and are their souls of no worth? Is there not another world worth thinking of, and looking after? Have you not many helps, the bible, catechisms, good books, and ministers to move, admonish, and instruct you in training up your children? Do you not engage to do this for them at their baptism? Could you be content to see a mastiff dog drag away your child to devour him, and not stir a foot, or speak a word to rescue him? O miserable parents! O cruel tigers! Worse than sea-monsters, "that draw out the breasts, that give suck to their young ones," Lam. iv. 3; they have not a word to speak, not a breath to breathe in prayer, not a hand to reach out to them, to pluck them from this Cerberus, this dog of hell! Oh, where is grace, yea, where is nature? The Lord pity those merciless parents: for shame learn your duty, and do it, and take this book for a help.

And you that are children, if parents neglected their duty, do not you neglect God and your souls: they look no further than your preferment in the world; but do you look after an everlasting happiness in the other world: some commended Patricius, Augustine's father, for educating his son a scholar, who became so famous a father in the church; "Alas!" said he,

\* Severe discipline strengthens genius, and prepares it for great undertakings.

“my father thought only to make me a rhetorician, not a Christian, for he was a heathen.” But whatever your parents trained you up for, law, or physic, or a trade, study christianity: if your parents were carnal, lament it, exercise faith in Christ, that guilt may be taken off from your father’s house, and double your diligence for your own soul, and for your children. If your parents were pious, devoted you to God, set you a good example, instructed and prayed for you; O make much of the covenant of parents, plead it, embrace it, and see that your heart and life be squared by it, else your privileges will be a testimony against you another day. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, tells us, that in the primitive times, a stole, or white garment was put upon the party baptized; and the minister said, “take this white and immaculate vestment, and see that thou bring it forth without spot at the judgment seat of Christ:” withal he tells of one Elpidophorus being baptized, and afterwards proving a profane wretch; the minister produced this garment, saying, “this linen, which is witness of thy apostacy, shall accuse thee at Christ’s coming.” You young people, esteem it a great privilege, that you were introduced into the visible church by baptism, and indeed it stands in good stead in your infant state, by virtue of your parents’ covenant; but being grown up, you stand upon your own legs, and must personally renew your baptismal covenant, or expect no benefit by it. Baptism will not save you, without the answer of a good conscience; the laver of regeneration will not avail to adult persons, without the renewing of the Holy Ghost: you must be born again of water, and of the Spirit, or you cannot enter into the kingdom of God: to which Austin subscribes, saying, *Nihil profuit Simoni Mago visibilis baptismus cui sanctificatio invisibilis desit*;\* you know Simon Magus was in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, though he was baptized: you are however to bless God for external privileges and religious education, they are signal mercies, not common to all. Bucholtzer thanks God that he was brought up under Melancthon; Mr. Whately, under Mr. Dod; yea, a Plato, that he was pupil to Socrates. But rest not here, be not satisfied unless the unfeigned faith dwell in you also, which was in your pious ancestors: mind their godly examples, and do not counteract them. A king of Poland was wont to carry the picture of his renowned father on a plate of gold about his neck, when he went on any notable expedition; kissing it, he said, “God grant that I may do nothing remissly, or unworthy of so good a father:” so be you followers of them, who through

\* Visible baptism availed nothing to Simon Magus, in whom invisible sanctification was wanting.

faith and patience, do now inherit the promises ; only be not content to be apish imitators of their outward acts, but see that you have the same spirit of faith, and love, and fear of God, the same repentance, and new obedience ; think you hear your dying parents charging you, (as Mr. Bolton did his children) that none of you presume to meet them at the great day, without a wedding-garment. To this end, attend daily on a powerful ministry, examine your consciences by the word of God, pray much in secret, be humble and docile, disdain not to learn catechisms, watch against occasions of sin, and improve christian society ; keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man ; read, meditate on, and labour to understand and practise, scripture truths and rules ; study to do all the good you can, and be useful in your generation.

But I shall detain you no longer in the porch, I humbly desire you to read and study the following treatise, which though short, is yet pithy, accurate, and sententious, and will, like a clue, lead thee through the labyrinths and meanders of the world ; omit the reading of it, and thou art a loser ; read it slightly, and thou gainest no good ; act contrary to it at thy peril, these sheets will rise up in judgment against thee another day. My earnest prayer, following this and other soul-helps, is, that the God of all grace would stamp his blessed image on the souls of the rising generation, awaken their consciences, enlighten their minds, renew their natures, subdue their wills, raise their affections to heavenly objects, in order that they may fill up our stations when our heads are laid in the silent dust, and may see better days, and have better hearts, to improve all occurrences to better purpose, than we that are now going off the stage ; and thus, good reader, I take leave, wishing thee much content and advantage in reviewing these spiritual flowers, gathered out of the scripture garden : as being

Thy soul's friend, and servant in Christ,

O. HEYWOOD.