

THE
Obligations
FROM NATURE AND REVELATION
TO
FAMILY RELIGION AND WORSHIP,
REPRESENTED AND PRESSED
IN
SIX SERMONS.



TO THE READER.

THE favourable acceptance, which the generality of serious christians have given to Mr. Howe's late posthumous treatise concerning the prosperous state of the Christian Interest before the end of time, hath encouraged me to take the same pains in fitting for the press the following sermons of the same excellent author concerning family-religion. The copy, transcribed by some unknown, but skilful hand, different from that by which the sermons already published were preserved, was communicated to me by my worthy friend Mr. Herman Hood.

In the treatise just mentioned, Mr. Howe speaks of this as one of the ways, by which we may hope that the Spirit poured out will produce the better state of religion which we are expecting, namely, by means of family order * more generally and vigorously set on foot among the professors of Christianity. And certainly we cannot reasonably entertain strong hopes of the revival of the power of godliness either in our own age or the succeeding, till this necessary part of the form of it becomes general among christians. As long as a customary neglect prevails in seasoning the rising age with proper instructions in the families to which they belong; while our youth, that spring from parents or are intrusted with masters who bear a Christian name, grow up altogether disused from the daily exercises of social piety; the seed of the church will soon be lost among the men of the world, and religion must die away without some very supernatural reviving.

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This just apprehension occasioned that agreement among the protestant dissenting ministers of this city, of which mention is made at the beginning of these discourses, that were preached in pursuance of it in the year 1693, to engage the attention of their several congregations at one and the same time to this very great and important duty. Mr. George Hammond at that time published a discourse upon the subject, at the desire of the united ministers; to which Mr. Matthew Barker annexed an appendix: and Mr. Samuel Slater printed a course of sermons upon the head. I have been informed that, that general endeavour had the good effect by God's blessing to dispose several heads of families to set up religious exercises in them.

Another effort was made lately with as general concurrence by our ministers in the city, on November. 20. 1720, to enforce the same needful practice; I hope not altogether without success.

But still is there not too visible reason to fear, that the neglect of family-religion is a growing evil among us? Without prying unnecessarily into the affairs of families, it is unavoidable to those who have any conversation in the world, to hear from such as have been servants or residents in the houses of many who make great pretensions to religion without doors, that there is no more acknowledgment of God among them in daily family-devotion, than if they believed no such being.

I thought therefore, that it might be serviceable to publish this short set of discourses upon the argument; which appear to me to have placed the duty upon the most clear and indisputable foot, so as to be fit to reach all that are open to conviction; with a plainness for the greatest part suitable to the meanest capacity, and yet with a strength not to be evaded by the most judicious, and at the same time with a life and spirituality fit to impress every serious mind.

It is no wonder to find people, who evidently discover a disaffection to religion, hardly drawn to the stated practice of its exercises in their houses. Till their hearts are touched with a lively sense and relish of true piety, it cannot be expected that they should be forward this way, but rather keep themselves in countenance in their neglect by the number of like examples among such as have not cast off all pretence to religion. The wonder is, that any, who give reason from the rest of their conduct for apprehending them in the judgment of charity to have religion at heart, yet should omit so plain and profitable a duty.

The common reasons alleged by such are, either their inability to express themselves properly in family-devotion; or an insuperable modesty, which will not allow them to speak before others with any freedom of thought or tolerable possession of themselves.

And I freely allow, that the one or the other of these may be the case with persons sincerely religious, so far as to hinder them from the performance of family-worship to edification, at least at first, without the assistance of forms. But in God's name let none continue the omission of so plain a duty, out of a superstitious preju-

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dice against precomposed prayers. Our forefathers the puritans were far from having an aversion to forms as such. Nor is our dissent founded upon a dislike of all use of them even in public; we only declare against the use of some passages which appear to us exceptionable, and against being so tied down to them, as to be obliged invariably to use them without alteration or addition. Most sober writers have concurred in advising to make use of them in the cases mentioned, till people can arrive at more improvement of judgment and a greater presence of mind. Many dissenters have published "forms for the assistance of those" to whom they were needful: as in Mr. Baxter's family-book; Mr. Murray's closet-devotions, recommended by Mr. Henry: Mr. Henry hath published some himself, at the end of his method of prayer. And as Mr. Howe in one of the following discourses declares his judgment for the use of them, rather than the duty should be omitted; so his practice was agreeable. There is a small book in octavo, entitled "prayers for families," printed by Mr. Thomas Parkhurst without any author's name, about the year 1795; of which the late reverend Mr. Jeremiah Smith gave me this account many years ago. Upon the marriage of a daughter of the right honourable Philip Lord Wharton, the lady being desirous to have the worship of God kept up in the family into which she was entering, requested Mr. Howe, Mr. William Taylor then his Lordship's chaplain, and Mr. Smith, to draw up some prayers for that purpose. Mr. Smith, according to his usual modesty, declined bearing a part in the service. But Mr. Howe and Mr. Taylor complied with the request; and their compositions were privately printed, and made use of in that Lady's family.

I only mention these things, to prevent the misapprehension of any, as if in what I have said I had offered any thing singular. All who love religion in earnest, whether in or out of the public establishment, whether in their judgments they prefer praying by forms or otherwise, will I doubt not agree in this; that it is better that God should be worshipped either the one way or the other both in secret, and in families, and in public assemblies, than that men should live in any of these respects, as "without God in the world".

For my own part, I should be glad that every head of a family were fully capable from time to time to represent the case of that under his charge with propriety and life, in supplication and praise and confession, according to all varying circumstances. But where that cannot be, yet I rejoice to know or to hear of a family, that seriously and solemnly calls upon the Lord in any way. Those who begin with a form, may find themselves gradually emboldened to go farther; and either totally in time lay that way aside; or sometimes pray the one way and sometimes the other, as they find the temper of their spirits to be; or, if they cannot get over the difficulties, which first made it necessary for them to use the assistance of other's compositions, yet they may be able gradually to interperse a sentence here and there suitable to special occurrences in their family, without any tremor.

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And after all, whether our words flow from the abundance of the heart, or we endeavour to excite affections answerable to what the words before us suggest ; if the God who knows the heart sees sincerity and true devotion in the worshipper ; it will undoubtedly be accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not.

I commend these discourses to the perusal of all serious christians, though of differing persuasions in lesser matters, earnestly begging, that by God's blessing they may reach the end of the author in preaching them, and of the transcriber in preparing them for public view ; namely, the revival of religion in families, and by that means the diffusing of it far and wide in the present generation and in those which are to come.

I am

Your hearty well-wisher
for your best interests,

Prescott-street,
May 11. 1726.

JOHN EVANS.

SERMON I.*

Joshua xxiv. 15.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

THIS is the magnanimous resolution of that great and good man, Joshua, notwithstanding the supposed revolt of all the people of Israel from God, who had been bound to him by the most sacred and endearing ties. "Though you," says he, should all go off and apostatize from God, even to a man, after all the great and glorious things that he hath wrought among you and for you; that shall not alter me: through his grace, the course that I will take, and that mine shall take, whom I can have any influence upon or any power over, shall be the same it was. I and my house will serve the Lord notwithstanding. Though you should all turn pagans and idolaters to a man, that shall not overturn the religion of my family or of my closet, but there shall be serving of the Lord still."

It hath been an unanimous resolution among the ministers of indulged congregations in and about this city, to insist upon the subject of family-worship, even all at once, at least as many as to whom it was possible; and to begin upon it this very day, as I doubt not they generally do. And I should as little doubt the approbation and concurrence of divers other reverend persons in the ministry, who are not of that character, if there had been the same opportunity of consulting them and of knowing their sense; that is, of as many as do seriously desire and covet to see the prosperous and flourishing state of serious, vital and

* Preached December 25th, 1693

practical religion and godliness in our days. But they, who could confer and agree to concur in such an endeavour as this, have done it with all the cheerfulness and unanimity that could be thought. Indeed, since that resolution was taken, a providence hath occurred *among us*, which some might reckon would have diverted and altered it for the present : a farther breach, which God hath made upon our congregation, by the late decease of a considerable and very useful member of it, worthy Mr. Collet. Of whom divers might expect to hear a distinct account given them ; apprehending, that it would not be so much an ornament to him or to his name when gone, as a means of instruction to them who are left behind.

But I am under restraint as to this ; partly by my relation ; but more principally by his own express prohibition, who declared his unwillingness to be made the subject of a funeral sermon. And that prohibition was equal (as any might understand,) to the most copious one that could have been made by way of commendation. For it more represented the temper of his spirit, than my words could have done ; the meekness, the humility, the modesty of it ; and was most agreeable to the habitual frame, from whence the way of his walking proceeded ; steady, but still and without noise ; and shewed how willing he was, that his exit out of this world might be with as much silence, as his course through it was.

Yet however, had I been to have preached a funeral sermon upon his account, I should never have laid aside for that the thoughts of this text. For I could not have found one in the whole Bible, from whence I might have more taken occasion to represent him, as to his person and as to his family, as an example of both personal and domestical religion, single and family godliness. And indeed were they who profess godliness generally in these respects like him, there would be much less need of preaching upon such a subject, or of taking up such a resolution as you have heard hath been general in reference thereunto.

But it hath been generally apprehended and feared, by them whom God hath set as watchmen amongst us, that the case is too much otherwise ; and that the religion of families languisheth, or indeed hath no place at all in many families, where yet there is a profession of and a pretence unto godliness above the common rate. For my own part, I do not know that there is this sinful omission with any of you that have families ; I do not know that there is : and therefore I cannot be understood, without great injury to me, to intend a reflection upon any particular person. But yet for all that, I cannot think a discourse upon this subject needless : for it is possible, many may be

guilty of this omission, though I know nothing of it; who do not covet to pry into families, beyond any particular occasion or call that I may have thereunto. And if it be so, it is not to be despaired of, but that through the blessing of God his word may be made use of to effect a conviction and a reformation of so great and so unsufferable an evil.

And it is possible too, that it may serve for the confirmation of such in that good course, as may be tempted to desist from it. For have none ever come within the compass of your knowledge, who have for some time continued to practise and keep on foot the worship of God in their families, but have at length abandoned it and given it over? That is a far fouler case. *Turpius ejicitur, quam non admittitur: it is a more ignominious thing to throw your religion and your God out of your families, than never to have admitted them.* I would labour to fortify all, as much as is possible, against that temptation.

And it is possible farther to be useful to divers, who yet have not families, but who may have; so as to be a guide and incentive to their purpose and practice for the future, when there shall be such occasions.

And even to us all, who are ever so resolute in the present use and for the continuance of this holy course, it may be useful for our quickening to manage this holy work with more seriousness, with more vigour, with more spirituality, and to better purpose, than we have been any of us to wont to do.

And as to the subject itself, you see the words of this text are very plain words. I and my house will serve the Lord. The word, house, indeed doth sometimes signify more largely; but it cannot be understood to signify any thing else here but an household: and so we are saved from any thing of a disputation about that matter. For Joshua speaks only of them, for whom he would answer, at least as to their visible practice, and whom he had a power over. "I and my house will serve the Lord." And he contradistinguisheth the case of his own family from the supposed different common case. For he supposeth all the rest to be gone off to paganism or the service of other gods; notwithstanding which the practice of his house and family should be the same that it was.

And for the term, serve, it is true the hebrew word here used is rendered promiscuously by the Septuagint in several places, so as sometimes to signify *λατρευειν*, that is, that service which is peculiar and appropriate to God under the notion of worship to him; and sometimes to signify *δουλειαν*, service in a much larger sense. Therefore I lay no stress upon the word, abstractly considered; but only considered according to the present circumstances. Abstractly considered, it is very true

it doth sometimes signify not only service to God, but to man. And again being referred to God, it sometimes signifies any other service or obedience or duty, besides worship; as we are to obey and comport with his pleasure in other things besides worshipping of him: and then this word serves to express that service. But in this place it can signify nothing but worship. That is most plain. It signifieth that sort of service, which must either be paid to the true God, or will be paid to false ones. "You may serve other gods; but I and my house will serve the Lord." So that it is worship or religion that is meant here, and nothing else. And therefore about that, there is no place or room left for disputation. And now so much being plain, you find a twofold resolution expressed in the text.

First. Concerning personal religion: the religion of a single person, solitary worship; that worship, that may be confined to a man's soul and to his closet. "I will serve the Lord: I will be a worshipper of him, as long as I live, let the rest of the world do what they will." And then here is a resolution expressed too,

Secondly. Concerning family-religion; and that as the care of the family-master, the governor of the family. He did not think he should answer the obligation that lay upon him as such, or do the part incumbent on him as so related, if he should shut up himself and his religion in a closet. No, but "I and my house will serve the Lord;" implying his resolution, both to do what was incumbent upon himself in worshipping God even among them, and to use the power he had to oblige them to a compliance and concurrence therein. Otherwise he must be thought to have spoken absurdly, when he says, "As for my house, we will serve the Lord;" if he must not be understood to have the authority in his own family to oblige them to attend thereupon.

It is the latter of these, which it suits our purpose to speak unto; though we shall in the close, God willing, look back upon the other two, as there will be occasion. The text will give it, and the series of the discourse will lead to it. So that, that which is left as the designed subject of my present discourse, is family-religion; the religion that belongs to a family as such, and which it belongs to a family as such to set on foot and to keep on foot in the family.

And here I cannot but be apprehensive, that wherever there is among professed christians a disinclination and aversion from such a course and practice as this, there will be (that they may give themselves a relief, that they may have some pretence and shelter against the urgency of what may be said in such a case,) an aptness clamourously to insist and cry out,

“But where is your proof? what proof have you, that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion? where is it required, that we must so, and so often, or in such and such a continued course, attend upon God in the performance of family-duties, and the exercises of domestical religion?” I doubt not, but by the blessing of God you will find, that there is proof clear and strong enough; as it was to be expected there should be in so important a case, and upon which so much depends. But before I come to give you any, I shall lay down some few things by way of preparation and premise. As,

1. That whereas this is matter of doubt, and is to be matter of dispute; that which is doubted of, is to be generally supposed not the substance of the thing spoken of, but only this or that circumstance. I hope that generally the matter that any would have brought into dispute, or for which they would desire proof, is not, whether there should be any such thing as religion in the world, or no. That cannot be the question with any, that call themselves christians, with any reason or modesty, at least till they have renounced that name: nor can any make that a question, consistently with themselves and with the dictates of human nature, unless they will renounce the name of man too. But the question must be, whether there ought to be religion in a family as such; and to be performed so, and so often, or in so orderly, continued and stated a course. Hereupon I would add,

2. That where the substance of any duty is agreed to be plainly required, it would be the most unreasonable thing in all the world to throw it off, upon a pretence, that such and such circumstances are not enjoined. Nothing can be more unreasonably absurd than that. For so you would come to throw out of the world the most undoubted parts of all religion whatsoever, the most essential, most noble, and substantial parts. There could be nothing of solitary and personal religion upon such terms. For instance; at this rate a man should be excused from ever remembering God as long as he lived, from ever having any thought of him, because Scripture doth not expressly tell us how often in a day we should think of him. And the same may be said of all other vital acts of religion. At this rate no body should be obliged to love God, because we are not told how often in a day we must put forth an act of love to him: and no body should be obliged to fear God, to exert any reverential acts towards him, because we are not told at what hour of the day it must be. And so for social worship, there could be no such thing upon these terms: if any man should say, I am not obliged to worship God in Christian societies any where, because he hath not expressly told us, you.

shall come together at nine, or ten, or eleven o'clock for such purposes. And so under that pretence here would be an end of all religion, because every circumstance, and particularly this of time and frequency, is not stated expressly and determined in Scripture. I add,

3. That wheresoever the substance of any duty is expressly enjoined, and the circumstances are not determined; if it be plain and evident, that the thing is necessary, (and I will now suppose, that so family-religion is, as well as religion in general, as that which I hope you will see proved;) then it is left to us to choose the circumstances; but not to choose them arbitrarily, or unfitly, or inconsistently with the end and design of the duty. This is one of the good man's characters, that he orders his affairs with discretion, (psalm 112. 5.) with judgment, as the word admits to be read: he judiciously considers the several obligations that lie upon him, so as seasonably to answer them all. If the thing itself be manifestly enjoined, it is required of us, that we find out the way of circumstantiating it, so as may most comport with the mind and pleasure of the legislator in laying us under such an obligation: and at our peril be it, if we do not find the circumstances, when the thing is required to be done.

As for instance, to suit this with a parallel case; you know it is an obligation upon family-masters to take care as to externals for them that are of the household. He that doth not provide for them of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Tim. 5. 8. This charge lies upon him, that according to his ability he is to provide for his domestics: it is enforced upon him by a general law and precept: "Thou shalt do no murder." He would be a murderer before God, and before all rational and considering men, that should famish his family, when he could provide for them, and when his pretence is nothing else but this, "God hath not told me in his word how many meals they shall have in a day, or at what hour of the day I am to dine or sup them; he hath not said, it shall be at eleven or twelve or one a clock, or at seven or eight, that I shall so and so provide for them." This man will be nothing less than a murderer, than if the particular hour were told him in the Bible, when he must take care that they shall have that which is convenient and competent for their meat and drink. And I hope, in process of time we shall come to evince, that they are not less liable to be found guilty as murderers before God, that do famish the souls of them that are committed to their charge; but that that guilt is unspeakably more foul and horrid and hateful. And therefore I observe,

4. That when any thing by general rules is enjoined in Scripture, then we are to use our understandings in deducing and bringing down that general rule to particular cases. For the Scriptures were written not for brutes, but for men; for an intelligent sort of creatures, that have understandings about them, and are capable of using them, so as to deduce and collect particulars out of generals, and so as to infer from such and such plain grounds suitable conclusions and inferences: and what is by manifest and just deductions to be drawn from a Scripture-ground, will equally oblige, as if it were *certis verbis*, expressed in the Scripture itself. God doth speak to us as men, and it doth not beseem the majesty of God to trifle with his creatures. Indeed it would be thought unfit for the majesty of a prince, a secular prince, to descend to every little punctilio, when his mind in his public edicts is plainly enough expressed. It may better be expected, that there should be a grandeur observed by the supreme and universal Lord of all; and we should not expect him to descend to every minute thing, to gratify the litigious cavilling humour of every one that hath a mind to find all the flaws he can in God's commands, rather than obey them; even all the flaws and defects that he can any way suppose.

The great cry in this case is, "Is not the Scripture a perfect rule both of faith and manners? And therefore what is not to be found there, as to faith, we are not bound to believe; as to manners or practice, we are not bound to do." This is the allegation, when any have a mind rather to throw off such a piece of duty towards him that gave them breath, than to comport with his mind and pleasure in it. I therefore add,

5. That divers things, not so expressly contained in Scripture, will be found equally to oblige, if they be matters of practice. They will equally oblige to such practice, though not in so many words expressed in Scripture, if by any other light, than what is contained in Scripture as such, it shall be made to appear, that they are just and necessary.

You will say, What other light? I say, the light and law of nature. For we are to know, that the Scriptures were not written to repeal the law of nature. That is an unrepealable law, never possibly to be repealed, while God is God, and man is man. For therefore is it called the law of nature, because it results from the correspondency between the nature of man and the nature of God; and so is as impossible to be repealed, as it is impossible at once, that God should be ungodded, and that you should be nullified and reduced to nothing. It is true indeed, if the former were, the latter would be. But the former being altogether impossible, as long as a rea-

sonable creature continueth such, the obligation of the law of nature will unalterably lie upon it.

You are therefore to consider; Was there no sin or duty in the world, before the Scriptures were written, for two thousand years together? when we are told, that before the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed, when there is no law. Rom. 5. 13. And therefore there was this law of nature, in respect whereof men are a law unto themselves. Rom. 2. 14. That is, if they will look impartially and faithfully into their own souls, and not wilfully overlook their natural dictates and sentiments; if they will commune with themselves. And the very writing of the Scriptures doth suppose this, and all preaching according to the Scriptures supposeth it. Otherwise what means the apostle's saying in that text, 2 Cor. 4. 2. Recommending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God? That, which upon an impartial appeal to the conscience of a man in the sight of God he shall be obliged to judge is just and equal, binds his practice, and hath its ground in Scripture too, though every circumstance relating hereunto be not found there.

Scriptural revelation doth graft upon nature, that is, it supposeth us men. Otherwise to what purpose were it to put such a book into our hands; if we were not with dependance, with subordination, to apply our own understandings to consider what is contained there; still expecting and looking up to the Father of lights, from whom this collection of truths doth come to us, that he would irradiate or direct our minds, and enable us to discern his mind, as it is signified to us the one or the other way? All appeals unto the judgments and consciences of men were in vain and to no purpose, if what I now say were not to be admitted. I speak to wise men; says the apostle, judge ye what I say, 1 Cor. 10. 15. God's own expostulations with men suppose it. "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" Ezek. 18. 29. All this doth suppose, that there is an understanding and a conscience, that is capable of judging. And whatsoever shall appear just and requisite and necessary unto that principle, must be understood to oblige by the authority of the Supreme Legislator, whose law this is. For he, that has made us and made our natures, has made this law that is written there.

Therefore this law is an inviolable law, and most deeply fundamental to all that we have contained in the Bible; which is but a superadded light. Inasmuch as it is most true, that this law of nature doth not declare, what is to be done by apostate and lost creatures in order to their recovery; therefore a supervening light is needful. The law of nature was impressed

upon the mind of innocent man, and respected his innocent state. But then, those that were obligations of duty laid upon him in that state, are incessant obligations. What! will God say, "Because my creature has made a defection from me, shall he by his own fault excuse himself from duty, and nullify the obligation of my law?" If that did oblige men to worship God, and oblige societies to worship him, lesser societies, supposing there had been such, while the state of innocency lasted; do we think, that that obligation is taken off by sin, by men's having offended and made a defection from God? As if men could nullify God's laws by disobeying them. And therefore, I say, what doth by the law of nature appear to be necessary, will equally oblige our practice, as if it were in so many express words in Scripture. And in the last place, I propose this to be considered too,

6. That it is a master-piece of the devil's artifice, to oppose the means of our direction in matters of practice to one another, and to their common end. And they are most stupid creatures, who will suffer themselves to be befooled by him in this matter. A great artifice of the devil! first to go about to oppose the light of nature, that is simply and truly such, (and there are characters, by which that may be discerned, though that is not the business of this hour,) unto Scripture-light; and then to oppose one piece of Scripture to another; and then to make it be thought, that all together is insufficient to the true end: or else to set the means against the end. This is a great design that he hath been driving, ever since there was a church in the world; and to engage men in broils and disputes upon such seeming oppositions; but all to divert the practice of what was really most necessary unto men's serving of God in this world, and their being happy with him in the other: and then to represent the means as insufficient to the end, and by consequence as opposite; as if all together would not serve, because one alone will not. As indeed this is plain, that the light of nature alone will not serve to enable a man to glorify God as God, and to conduct a man to a final felicity in him. Therefore, says the devil, "It is of no use at all;" and so men are to be given up to enthusiasm. Thus he imposeth upon one sort of men. Again, if such and such things be found not to be contained expressly in the Scripture-revelation, then Scripture-revelation alone is represented as insufficient; and thereupon there must be I know not how many traditions and inventions of men pitched upon, to supply or make up the defects of Scripture; or otherwise, upon pretence of this insufficiency, the end, that should be served by it, is represented as impossible to be served; and the Scripture shall be pretended to

throw religion out of the world, because it is no sufficient means to serve it: and at last men shall be left to live irreligiously, according to the disinclination and bent of a disaffected heart.

God hath not left us altogether "ignorant of Satan's devices;" and "in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." When he would so grossly impose upon us in so plain cases, we are very foolish creatures, sillier than the silliest bird, if we will suffer ourselves to be beguiled and imposed upon; especially as to such parts and pieces of our religion, as upon which all our present comfort and welfare, and our future and eternal hopes do so immediately depend. It would be great folly in so plain a case.

Do but consider a little, wherein this doth appear most plain, so that every one may understand it if he will. Take the most unquestionable and indisputable things, that lie within the compass of natural revelation, and that cannot be understood to serve any ill purpose, or to gratify any corrupt inclination in the heart of a man, but directly the contrary; take these natural sentiments, and take the whole compass of Scripture together with them; and here is that, which in point of rule both for faith and practice is every way sufficient to serve its end. When we say, the Scripture is a complete rule, we do not mean as severed and cut off from the law of nature, or in opposition to that, or as excluding that; but as including it; and as excluding only the unnecessary and arbitrary inventions of men, and the additions that they think fit to subnect to it. Take the Scripture, in conjunction with the frame of most unquestionably natural dictates and sentiments; and here we have an entire discovery of all that is requisite to our acceptable walking with God. And indeed all those more essential necessary dictates of the law of nature are contained in the Scripture. But there are many things, that are still to be borrowed from thence, which may respect the matter of undetermined circumstances; and circumstances of that kind, that they are necessary to actions to be done. Not merely unnecessary circumstances. For if any would take their advantage and occasion from thence, to devise what circumstances they please; that is a groundless and injurious pretence. There can be no action done but with circumstances; and the determination of some circumstances is necessary: as, it is impossible for an assembly ever to meet together, if they do not agree upon a time: there can be no such thing as social worship, if the persons that are to associate do not agree. Such a circumstance as this is necessary, because there cannot be worship without it. But for unnecessary circumstances, which signify nothing

to the work, and without which it may be, and may be as well and perhaps better; these cannot be fetched from the law of nature. But from the law of nature I can fetch this circumstance; if I be obliged to worship God, then I must find some time for it. And if persons be obliged to worship God together, then they must find some time to come together. And therefore all that is substantial in religion, though a great deal of it be in the law of nature, you have it over again in Scripture. And for whatsoever of circumstance is necessary unto such exercises of religion, if you have not all those circumstances in the Scripture, yet the law of nature compared with Scripture will oblige you to find out fit circumstances; such as by which it shall be possible for the enjoined duty to be done, and such as without which it cannot be done.

And so in this sense the Scripture is a perfect rule, in opposition to unnecessary inventions; but not in opposition to the necessary parts of the law of nature, or whatsoever that is necessarily to be directive to us in. As, if Scripture say, "Worship God;" the law of nature saith the same thing; but it over and above obligeth me to circumstance it duly, and so as that the thing designed may be possible to be done. And if both together do lay me under an obligation to this or that part or kind of religion and duty, my obligation will be indisputable and indispensable hereupon.

These preparations being laid, we shall (God willing,) go on hereafter to evince to you the obligation that is upon us to family-worship; on the governors of families to take care, that it be set up; and to oblige those under their charge to concur; and their obligation spontaneously and willingly to concur.

SERMON II*.

BECAUSE I lay a great stress in the argument before us upon the law of nature, as you may see by what hath been already offered; it may be requisite, before I proceed upon the forelaid grounds to the proofs, that I should obviate some things which may arise in the minds of some or other concerning this law.

Objection. It may be said; "To lay a weight in this matter upon the law of nature, is to lay it upon the most uncertain thing in all the world. Who can tell, what the law of nature is? How obscure and dark, how dubious and mutable a thing doth it seem to be; depending with one man upon this or that apprehension or fancy or inclination, and with others upon another?" To this I would say as follows,

1. The law of nature, as it lies in the minds of men, is a mightily shattered thing. But,
2. It is not equally obscure in all things.
3. In reference to what I design to appeal to it in, it is most clear and indisputable: and I shall lay a weight and stress upon it no where else, but where it is so.
4. As to what relates to this matter, religion and the wor-

* Preached December 17th, 1693.

ship of God in general, and which we shall afterwards have occasion to deduce and draw down to family-worship ; it is so very plain, that is, the general is so plain, that I may be as sure what the law of nature is in the case, as I may be that contradictions cannot be true. For the worship of God or religion doth carry that in it, the assertion or affirmation whereof must as necessarily exclude the contrary, as one proposition must exclude another contradictory to it.

For instance. When I worship God, my worshipping of him doth imply these affirmations in it ; that he is supreme, that he is the best of beings, that all things do depend upon him, that I have my own absolute dependance upon him, that in his favour stands my life, that his displeasure and anger towards me not reconciled must be a mortal and destructive thing to me. My declining or refusing to worship him implieth all the contrary negations. If the former affirmations be true ; (and the conscience of every man may be applied unto, whether they be not true ;) the contrary negations can no more be true, that is, the contradictory, than it is possible for the same thing to be true and false.

So little do we need to be at an uncertainty or in a suspense, what the law of nature, as we shall refer to it, is. It is nothing else, but that essential reference between God and his creatures, which, upon the supposed existence of both, is necessarily and unavoidably, whether I think of it, yea or no. It is not an uncertain or mutable thing ; it doth not depend upon my thinking or not thinking of it. Whether I think or think not, whether I sleep or wake ; if God is and I am, such obligations must lie upon me necessarily and unalterably in this state of the case. That is, there are these things to be considered in God ; and such really is the state of things between him and me, that I cannot but be under such obligations. And therefore it is vain to suppose, that the law of nature in these respects is an arbitrary and changeable thing. It is no more changeable, than the essential references must be between God and me, while he exists, and I exist : so that I cannot make these obligations to be by my thinking of them, nor can I unthink them into nothing.

And when we therefore read of the law of nature as a law written in us, as the apostle's expression is ; that must suppose it to have been, before it is written, that is, in order of nature before. For what is it that is written? Something that was before, at least in the order of nature. Those mutual references must be between God and us, which are only founded upon our own natures. They had a pre-existence ; that is, whether there be any such impression upon me or no ; if it remain, or

if it be blotted out, that doth not nullify the obligations between me and my Maker. And if those obligations do unalterably and indispensibly lie upon me in reference to myself, it will be a very easy deduction, when we come to that, to shew that they must lie upon me also, in reference to those that I am concerned for. And hereupon, though after the apostle we call this a "law written in our hearts," we must consider it as antecedent to that impression. Cicero, a heathen, calls it *non scripta sed nata lex, a law born with us*; which results from the very existence of such a creature, of such a nature, related to the Supreme Being as his offspring, or one that hath immediately been raised up out of nothing by him.

But now upon all this, such preparatories being forelaid, we shall proceed to the proof of what hath been asserted; that is,——That it is incumbent upon the governors of families to take care that there be such a thing as family-religion preserved and kept up in their families as such.——We must here note to you, that by the exercises of religion in families, we do not mean, that all the exercises of religion must be there; that every instituted Christian ordinance can have place in a family. We do not intend that, unless in such families as may be also churches; as we read of some such in Scripture. But we mean such exercises of religion, as a family is the capable seat and subject of; as it is of those parts of merely natural worship, which are wont to be referred to that head: as prayer, comprehending confession of sin, and thanksgiving for mercies; and instruction, the endeavour of knowing and of being acquainted with the mind and will of God, touching what we are to believe concerning him, and touching what we are to do in a way of duty towards him. These are things, which lie within the compass of natural worship.

It is true, that there are instituted ordinances of worship besides, (as even these mentioned are instituted, as well as natural,) that do belong to a certain specified seat and subject; to wit, such and such societies, which the very institution itself doth characterize and notify as the apt and convenient seat and subject of such worship. Those I do not speak of. But that such parts of worship, that have been spoken of, which are natural as well as instituted, namely, praying to God, and instruction in the matters that concern us towards him, do belong to families as such, I shall labour to evince and make out to you. And I shall endeavour to do this, partly upon *rational*, and partly upon *scriptural* grounds. And I shall do it in reference to these two things;

I. To the substance of family-religion ; that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion, containing those two substantial parts that I have mentioned. And,

II. To the frequency thereof ; when and how often such and such acts and exercises of religion ought to be performed.

I. That there ought to be such a thing as family-religion, made up of the mentioned parts, *family-prayer*, and *family-instruction*.

1. I shall labour to make out this to you upon *rational* grounds. And to that purpose I shall give you one general argument,—from the notion of religion generally considered—which, as such, must be understood to carry with it a double respect, namely,—to its *object*—the great God : and—to its *subject*—a reasonable or intelligent creature, or a collection of such, by whom it is to be performed. Under the former notion, or in the former reference, it is to be looked upon as a duty to him, to whom I perform it, or such and such exercises of it. Under the latter notion, it is to be looked upon as a thing necessary for ourselves, for our own welfare and advantage, present and eternal.

The former notion doth not extinguish or exclude the other. But it sheweth, how admirably God hath connected things, even in their natures ; and with how tender regard to his creatures, that shall continue in, or that shall be reduced to an obediential or governable state and posture towards him : that they cannot do what is for his honour and glory, but they must be promoting their own true interest at the same time and by the same thing ; that as religion is a homage to the eternal Being, a debt that the reasonable nature ought to pay him ; so it is as to ourselves a means to refine our spirits, to purge them from terrene dross ; in the acts and exercises of which, we converse with the best of beings, the most pure, the most glorious, the most vital ; and so derive an enlivening and purifying influence into our own souls. These notions are not inconsistent, or exclusive of one another. But the Author of our being hath so kindly ordered the state of things between himself and us, that that which sums up all our duty, sums up all our felicity too, Love to God : this sums up all that we are to do, and all that we are to enjoy. By one and the same love, we vitally do all that can be done by us in point of duty, and vitally enjoy all that can be enjoyed by us in point of felicity. Therefore wonder not, that there should be these two references of religion, that belong to it in itself most abstractly considered, so that we cannot consider or form a notion of it, but

we must involve both of these: for it must be performed to some one, and by some one. There can be no such thing as vital religion, but it must be terminated upon God, and subjected in ourselves and so cannot but have these distinct refer- ences with it. Hereupon then,

(1.) Consider religion according to the former reference, as a homage to God; and if it be found equally to be a homage to him from a family, as it is from a single person, then the obligation to family-religion will be indispensable and indispu- table upon this ground. We shall consider, how this obliga- tion as to persons doth arise, that is, to pay such a continual homage to God as religion includes and involves in it.

[1.] As he is the *most excellent* of all beings, so there is an obligation to worship him, or to bear a religious disposition and affection of soul towards him. That name of God, which in- cludes all divine excellencies and perfections in it, "is exalted above all blessing and praise." Neh. 9. 5. Hence it is con- sequent, that my capacity measures my obligation. And I pray consider that; and let your own thoughts, as you hear it, ex- amine it. If the divine name, comprehensive of all excellen- cies, be exalted above all blessing and praise; then I can never go beyond what I owe in point of homage thereunto. And therefore it cannot be, but that capacity must measure obliga- tion. If I am capable of doing so much in a way of homage to the supreme and most excellent Being, I am bound to come up to that. If I can do more, I must still do that more; and so on still; because this blessed name is exalted above all blessing and praise. If I have a capacity then in my own per- son to do any thing in a way of duty towards this most excel- lent Being, whereunto therefore I owe that duty; whatsoever that capacity of mine extends to, I am to serve and glorify him according to the utmost of it. And if I am to be considered, not only in my own single personal capacity, but as the head of a family also; then, if capacity do measure obligation, I am to do all that in me lies, that he may have as much honour from my family, as he is to have from me; because it is as much owing, and I can never overdo in point of duty towards him, in whatever capacity I stand.

Suppose then my single capacity to be indeed improved to serve and glorify him, but that I neglect the other; may not he come and say, "There is another capacity in which you stand, pray what do you for me in that? Do you owe me no duty, as you are the master of a family, and have the care of others upon you? Both you and those for whom you are con- cerned owe me duty in that capacity; and you are concerned to see that that duty be done, by reason of the authority that you

have over them, and the obligation that you can subordinately lay upon them." This is implied in the text; "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He supposeth that capacity inherent in him, that he could not only do such duty or service himself, but that he could oblige those that were under his care.

Now where is that man, that dare stand forth and say, "It is true I owe all the homage I am capable of performing, for my own person, to that most excellent of all beings, because he is most excellent, and because his name is far exalted above all blessing and praise; but my family owes him nothing, or I owe him nothing for my family?" Whereas you are in the capacity of a governor of a family, as well as in a single capacity; and may do still more to glorify that name in your family-capacity, than you could do in the other alone: but while there is a capacity unanswered of glorifying the most excellent Being, an obligation must remain upon me to answer it, since I can never here exceed or even come up to what he deserves.

[2.] The obligation to religion ariseth also from our dependance upon the Divine Being for our first and for our continued being, as he is our Creator, and our continual Preserver, and consequently our Owner. And can any man say, "God hath created me, but he hath not created mine! He continually preserves and sustains me, but he doth not preserve and sustain mine!" But if I owe him my all, upon account of my own dependance on him, for my being, and for my hoped and expected well-being, present and eternal; is not the case so with my family also? Is he not the Proprietor and Owner of that, as well as of myself? Who would not tremble to say, "God hath no interest in my family, no right there?" And if he hath an interest and propriety there, shall he not be owned and have a homage paid him by my family as such? And I being a certain sponsor for them, and set over them, am bound to do all that in me is, that the obligation upon them be answered, as well as that personally upon myself.

[3.] The dueness of religion as a homage to God, may be farther argued from the very nature of man: not only with reference to personal, but to domestical religion, as he is naturally not only a reasonable, but a sociable creature. As he is a reasonable creature, so he owes religion as a homage to him, who has been the Author of this rational, intelligent nature to him. As he is a sociable creature, so he owes social religion, or worship in society: and in that society first, wherein he is first capable of rendering it, that is, in his family. This obligation lies upon him, and is always first to be answered. There was social worship in families, before there could be

other social worship. And that obligation, if it lay once, lieth always upon the same sort of persons. As God hath made me a creature apt for society, and hath cast me into such societies, I am obliged to worship him in them, by the very law of my own nature.

[4.] This debt of religion to God, even as from a family, is to be argued from the very constitution of families. They are divine plantations settled by God himself, for this very end and purpose, to be nurseries of religion and godliness. If God be the Author of such a constitution, and if religion be the end for which he hath purposely constituted them, then certainly there ought to be family-religion and godliness. For the former, nothing is plainer. "God setteth the solitary in families." Psalm 68. 6. God hath so provided, that men should not live single and apart in this world in an ordinary course; but he hath so stated things, that they must be united and meet together first in families. And he in his providence makes so many single persons to be so and so related, as to constitute a family. And what will he have these families for? Plainly to be seminaries of religion. And see, how his design for that purpose may be evinced. If the most fundamental relation in a family, the conjugal relation, be for that end, and was appointed by God for that end, then certainly the family must be in the design of its constitution set up for that end: but the former is plain. The fundamental relation in the family was, that God might have out of it a godly seed; as the original constitution of families is referred to in Mal. 2. 15. "Did not he make one" for one at first? "And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed." He did not design the original constitution of that fundamental relation, by which mankind was to be continued and propagated in this world, only that there might be a continual descent of human nature; but that religion might still be transmitted from age to age. And this design of his he never quits. For is it a supposable thing, that his creature, by revolting from him, and sinning against the obligation of that law, which was naturally and primarily laid upon him as he was such a creature, should be capable thereby of nullifying God's constitution, or making such obligation to cease?

Nothing then can be plainer, than that, if God have appointed families to be nurseries of religion from age to age in this world, there must then be such a thing as family-religion. Otherwise why should he seek such a godly seed out of human families, more than out of the cells of wild beasts, if there were no such thing as religion and godliness designed by him to be kept up in families? How shall godliness spring up

with human nature in families, if there be no such thing as family-godliness carefully maintained and kept up in the several exercises of it there ?

Thus far the obligation unto religion, as it is a debt to God, and equally concerning families as persons, may be plainly inferred from *rational* grounds : and that these things were not unapprehensible to men, even by natural light ; though they depend not thereupon ; for whether we understand this or understand it not, this truly is the state of the case. But that the thing hath such a foundation in nature, may be collected hence, that they who have had no other light than merely natural, have apprehended an obligation upon them to family-religion. For otherwise how came it to pass, that besides their temple-worship, among the pagans they had their *lares*, their *penates* to worship in their families, their family and domestical gods, as they called them ? Whence came it to pass, that Laban had his gods in his house, which were carried away from him by Rachel ? Whence was it, that Micah had his idol in his house, and his domestical priest to manage religion in his family ? As in Judg. 18. you have the story at large, from ver. 14. But you may say, " All this was but idolatry."

But then I would appeal to your reason or any man's else ; In the room and stead of what stood that idolatry ? Was it to be supposed, that it must stand in the room of irreligion, or in the room of no religion ? Or did it only stand in the stead of true religion ? Let any man answer by the rules of reason and conscience, when he considers this case. Here was idolatrous worship in families among wilder pagans ; they had their *lares*, their *penates*. What was to be in the room of this ? Or what was this to be in the room of ? Was it to be in the room of no religion, or of true religion ? Sure it must be in the room of true religion ; and that it had supplanted. It did not stand in the room of no religion, or no religion was not to be the thing which should succeed it, if this idolatrous worship were to be removed out of such families.

So may this matter be argued concerning family-religion and the dueness of it ; if you consider religion in general as a homage owing to God, and equally owing to him from a family as from single persons ; and to which a single person, if he be also a master of a family, is equally obliged for them as for himself to do the utmost that he can, that it should be rendered to God as a debt to the divine Majesty.

SERMON III.*

TO prove that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion, it hath been proposed to consider both the *rational* and the *scriptural* grounds, upon which it stands.

For the former, the *rational* grounds of it, we have chosen to insist upon one general argument from the nature of religion; which, as hath been observed, is to be considered under a twofold notion, both of which it naturally involves;—as a homage to God, and—as an advantage to men.—If it be found in this double reference to concern men in families as such, then it ought upon both accounts to have place there.

We have already considered it for this purpose in the former reference, as a homage to God. Proceed we now to the other branch.

(2.) Consider religion as an advantage to men. And if upon that account too, the reason of the thing doth as much reach my family, as it doth myself; then family-religion ought to be inferred upon me as a charge, as an obligation necessarily incumbent, as well as personal religion. Plain it is, that religion is the greatest advantage to a man that he is any way capable of. Do not we know, that he is an undone, lost creature,

* Preached December 24, 1693.

separate from God, having nothing to do with God? It is by religion, that he comes to have to do with God. He neither trusts him nor loves him nor feareth him nor delighteth in him, if there be no religion; for these are all the essential, vital parts of it. And therefore religion, as it is that by which I have to do with God, is necessary for me. And it is necessary for mine, as much as for me.

And a twofold consideration will evince to us the obligation, that must lie upon family-governors to introduce and to keep up religion in their families, upon this account, as a necessary advantage to them; namely, *paternal love*, and *paternal fidelity*. When I say, *paternal*, it is not as if I would confine the duty as owing from a parent to a child only. For the notion of paternal goeth farther. Every family-governor is a *paterfamilias*, in a sort, a father unto the whole family; as a prince is a father to the whole community which he governs. And so it is a sort of paternal love and paternal fidelity, that he oweth and is chargeable with in reference to the whole family, who is the head and governor of it. Whereupon it is, that duty among all relatives is summed up in the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." We must thereupon understand it to be implied, that all superiors are signified by father and mother, and all inferiors by children, the implied opposite term. Hereupon then I say, that

[1.] *Paternal love* doth oblige the governor of a family, the *paterfamilias*, to take care, that family-religion do obtain in his family, as it is a necessary advantage to them. The thing speaks itself so plainly, that I need not insist upon it; but only direct your thoughts thereupon to the contrary, that you may see, with how odious and frightful a visage that will look. If paternal love do oblige and would prompt to such a care of a family, as that religion may obtain and take place among them, as a necessary advantage which they cannot want; then the contrary unto this, must speak in the root the contrary unto love: and that contrary must be the most horrid thing in this case that can be thought, that is, cruelty unto the very height. For, as this love speaks tenderness, mercifulness, compassion to the souls of men, that I cannot endure to see them perish in ignorance of God and estrangement from him and neglect of him; the contrary must needs speak the most horrid and the most barbarous cruelty; as if a man should say, and not care if it was written in his forehead, "I mind not what becomes of the souls of men that are committed to my charge, I care not whether they be saved or perish, whether they be happy or miserable to all eternity." With how horrid and frightful a visage doth this

look, only to represent and state the matter just as it is! And

[2.] Paternal *fidelity* doth oblige to it also. For there is a trust committed by the great and universal Lord of all to every master of a family, over them that are under his charge; and in reference to them he is a trustee. It is virtually said to every one, by the divine law and providence compared and put together; "I constitute thee my trustee in reference to this part of mankind, as many as are collected and gathered into thy family, and belong to it, whether naturally or by accession; they are thy charge, I intrust them to thee." Thereupon, as hath been noted to you formerly, from 1 Tim. 5. 8. He that doth not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. The word is very emphatical, *προνοει*; he that doth not use his mind and forethought about the affairs and concerns of his family. Let it be but according to common reason considered, how far that providing for one's own must extend. And to say, that one that doth it not is worse than an infidel, is to say, that infidels even by the light and law of nature may be directed to do much, in reference to the care of their families in matters of religion. As is intimated by what was noted to you the last time about their *lares* and their *penates*, their household gods to worship in families, besides the worship which they used to pay in the temples; and whereof you have instances in Laban's and in Micah's families. And whereas it may be obvious to say, "But all this was but idolatry:" this must indeed be confessed to be true. But what was to be in the room of that idolatry? Sure true religion, and not irreligion! So that room should have been filled up. And no man, that doth but commune with himself and consult his own understanding, can allow himself upon serious thoughts to think, "I do owe, even upon account of a trust reposed in me, a care and concern about the outward man of the several individual persons of my family, but none at all about their souls; I am to take care, that they have meat and drink and all necessaries for their bodies, but about their souls I am to take no care." Men will know one day, that they owe an account and a severe account too unto the Author of all nature, if they allow themselves to violate the law of nature; which is not an arbitrary thing, doth not depend upon the minds of men, or what they think or think not. But whether they think or not, the nature of things alters not; but God will be a God still, and a creature will be a creature still, and the respects the same between God and a creature. So that it is an idle mistake to think, that the law of nature is a mutable thing. Men do so impose upon themselves, merely upon this ground, that they

think there is no law of nature but what exists in men's minds; whereas it lies even in the nature of things, and their natural references to one another. It is to be considered in its objective state, before it be considered in its subjective. Those respects that result between one thing and another, and especially between Creator and creature, will be unalterably the same, whatsoever is, or is not in our minds.

And so whether you consider religion as a homage to God, or as an advantage to man, you see the obligation that will lie upon men either way unto family-religion. But then, according to the method proposed,

2. I come to evince to you the substance of the thing, that there ought to be family-religion, from *scripture-grounds*. And,

(1.) I shall labour to establish the *general foundation* upon such grounds; namely, that there is a charge lying upon the governors of families to take care, that there be such a thing as family-religion; that there may be no shifting here; but that they may know, where the obligation primarily lies, and where the fault lieth, if it be not answered: that it is incumbent upon heads of families, to settle and keep on foot religion in them.

[1.] If there be a power given them, there is a care lying upon them. These two will answer one another. But they have a power given them. The station of superiority, wherein God hath set them, speaks that. "Honour thy father and thy mother." In reference to the inferior relatives of the family they have a governing power: and if there is a duty to be paid them, then there is a power wherewith they are invested, that renders them the due objects thereof. Therefore the great God himself, speaking of himself as invested with such capacities, and personating the governor of a family, saith, (Malac. 1. 6.) "A son honoureth his father: I am a father, where is the honour due to me hereupon? A servant feareth or reverenceth his master; I am a master, where is my reverence?" Therefore there is an honour and reverence due to fathers and masters as such, and therefore a power conferred upon them; and with a power a care cannot but be incumbent.

[2.] How otherwise was it possible for Joshua, as here in the text, to undertake for his family as well as himself? to be a sponsor for them? "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

[3.] How comes it to pass, that Abraham is so highly commended for this, and his example recommended, that he would command his household, that they should keep the way of the Lord! That he should use an authority, and lay an obligation

upon them to keep God's ways, that is, no doubt, to attend upon the exercises of religion?

[4.] If there were not such a charge and care lying upon a family-master, what meaning can we suppose the words of the fourth commandment should have! "Thou shalt remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and even the stranger," a lodger. Whence is this, that such a charge should be laid upon the *pater-familias*? though as is commonly and very aptly observed, it doth comprehend together the conjugal relatives, who are spoken to but as one person. These two are one; and then the other relatives in the family ensue, "thy son, thy daughter," &c. Yea and if there be a stranger, he is to partake, if in the provisions, in the religion of the family too. And I remember it to have been one of the meditations of Mr. Fuller in his miscellanies; that, having had a person of great quality one night lodged under his roof as a stranger, out of an excess of modesty he forbore the duties of his family that night: and he hath a penitential meditation hereupon, acknowledging his great fault, and making very solemn resolutions and vows never to be guilty of the like again; but if any one, though never so great, did partake in the provisions, he should partake in the religion of his family.

But that this charge should be laid upon the family-master, even about that piece of religion, the observation of the Lord's day; it bespeaks a charge from God incumbent upon the *pater-familias* in reference to the religion of the family.

And if any should yet pretend to have a doubt; I would have them to consider the matter with caution, whether there be any such charge lying upon them. Truly it concerns men, in point of prudence, to beware how they are shy of owning an authority in their families: for if you should pretend to doubt it, you would teach them it may be to doubt and to deny it too, and so make yourself to signify nothing in your family. But if that is but of small concernment to you; it is of the greatest concern imaginable, in reference to him whom you represent, and with whose authority you are invested. You have so much of the power of God lodged and seated in you; and it is treachery and falsehood to the great Lord and Ruler of the world, to let his authority, wherewith he hath invested you, be neglected and slighted and trampled upon, or not exerted and put forth to the uttermost for the ends for which he hath so seated it.

And if yet any should think, that such a charge is not sufficiently evinced to lie upon them; I would very fain know, in reference to what relative of the family you think it lieth not? For,

First. In reference to the conjugal relatives, they are joint partakers therein; and there is a duty incumbent upon both, even upon the inferior relative, especially in case of the other's absence or indisposition. But it lieth supremely upon him that is first in that relation, who is required to dwell with his wife, even as a man of knowledge, according to knowledge; (1 Pet. 3. 7.) implying therefore, that he hath a charge even in reference to her. And it is his great iniquity, if he do not labour to render himself capable to discharge it; to add to her treasury of knowledge of divine things, that concern her Godward. They are to be mutual helpers one to another, in reference to the concernments of their souls and a future state, and to the joint duty, which they owe to the Author of their being, as partakers together "of the grace of life." But the charge lieth chiefly here, (though it be mutual towards one another,) upon the superior relative; though each is also to endeavour to the uttermost the saving of the other's soul, "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Cor. 7. 16.) Both are as it were to engage to their uttermost in an endeavour to save one another's souls.

Secondly. In reference to children, there can never be any doubt; who are sprung from you, in reference to the souls of whom you have a special charge lying upon you. It is true, you did not make their souls; there is another Father of their spirits. You are the fathers of their flesh, not of their spirits; as these two are contradistinguished in Heb. 12. 9. But you are the means of those souls coming into union with mortal flesh, and of bringing them into a world of snares and temptations dangerous to their souls. Can it then be, that you should be exempt from care and concern in reference to their souls?

Thirdly. As to servants, God hath charged them to obey you. He hath most expressly directed you to command them equally, as knowing yourselves to be under a command, that you have a Master in heaven, and are to command them for his ends and purposes. Nothing is plainer, if you look to Eph. 6. Col. 3. & 4. 1. Tim. 6. where these relative duties are spoken of. So that they come by contract, as your children do by nature, under your commanding and governing power and authority. And that power infers care, and principally about their souls. I could appeal to any master of servants in such a case. Do you expect, that your servants should serve you only with their hands? Do you not expect they should serve you with their minds and understandings, as well as their limbs? Sure then their inward man, their souls are to be cared for by you, as well as their outward man, their bodies. You would not

have them to do you only such service as you can receive from a beast; and therefore you are to take care of their spirits, as well as their brutal part.

So much I reckoned it was necessary to lay down here upon Scripture-grounds, to clear our foundation, that there is such a thing as a charge, a care lying upon governors of families over the families which God hath entrusted them with, to keep up religion there. Hereupon,

(2.) We shall proceed to give you proof upon *scripture-grounds*, that there ought to be in particular those two parts of family-religion maintained and kept up by them, upon whom this care and charge hath been evinced to lie; to wit, family-instruction, and family-prayer. And we shall endeavour to evince both.

[1.] From such scriptures, as either command the one or the other of these, in such terms as that it may be discernible that the obligation will reach to families; that is, to the family-governors in reference to the family: either express precepts; or virtual precepts, such passages as some way imply and infer precepts, and are so applicable, or from whence inferences may be collected and drawn. As,

First. For family-instruction. You have a most express command upon masters of families, that they shall teach the substance of religion to them who are under their care: nothing can be plainer than those words in Deut. 6. After this was given in charge in general, (which contains all religion in it,) ver. 5, 6. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: and these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." Then it follows, ver. 7. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Observe what they were to teach them; the substance of religion, all comprehended in the love of God, which is the fulfilling of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c. And these words," and all that may be referred thither, to that great and all-comprehending topic, "thou shalt teach and diligently teach thy children." Children means the family, as we noted to you before; an apt synecdochical expression, as *pater-familias* is the head of the whole family. "And thou shalt teach them, when thou sittest in thine house." It is true, there are other occasions to be taken: but this speaks a stated teaching, to have times on purpose to collect and gather the family, and to set one's self in the authority of a family-master, and there instruct and teach those under his care and charge, in the great substan-

tials of religion. You have the same thing inculcated in Deut. 11. 19.

And more general precepts of the same kind are applicable plainly enough unto this purpose. As, when we are required to "exhort one another," and to do it "daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. 3. 13. And to have the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, that we may teach and admonish one another. Col. 3. 16. How obvious is it to any one of common sense to infer, that if I owe this occasionally unto a fellow-christian, I owe it statedly to my own family? If there were no such express precept, and a man had this to allege in the judgment of the great day, Lord, thou gavest me no command; suppose there were no such positive commands, as those in Deuteronomy, and that in Proverbs for instructing and training up children in the way they should go: suppose such general precepts as those just mentioned were alleged to any man in the great day, "You knew well enough, that it was a duty lying upon you towards any fellow-christian, as there was occasion, to teach and exhort and instruct him; and he was under the same obligation towards you; had you not reason and understanding enough to make an inference, that if you owe so much to another occasionally, you must owe much more statedly to your own?" What could a man say, if this were urged upon him from the tribunal of the Supreme Judge?

Secondly. For family-prayer, such general precepts, as the Scripture is full of, are capable enough of application to this particular case. And we owe so much to God, yea to ourselves, to our own nature, as we are creatures endued with a reasonable nature, as to make the inference. That is, that when we are charged to pray with all prayer and with all supplication, we collect hence; sure it cannot be said, that family-prayer is no prayer.

And it is a very observable thing, though I have not found it observed, to this purpose; that in those several places of Scripture, where the duties of domestical relatives are largely spoken of, immediately thereupon there is a charge given about prayer, or some mention of prayer. Thus, after the apostle had directed in the 5th and 6th chapters to the Ephesians; Ye wives, carry it so and so to your husbands, and ye husbands to your wives; ye children to your parents, and parents to children; ye servants to masters, and masters to servants; and after some directions given to arm ourselves for spiritual conflicts; he immediately subjoins, (chap. 6. 18.) "Praying always with all prayer and supplication." So in Col. 4. 2. just after a summary of the several duties of family-relatives, follows

this exhortation; "Continue in prayer:" implying, that there must be a continued course of family-prayer between these several family-relations, or else all is in vain and to no purpose. And when the apostle Peter had given like directions, all is enforced upon this consideration, that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." 1 Pet. 3. 12. Be sure you do so and so, and let your consideration be orderly and regular, as ever you expect your prayers should be answered, that in your families shall from time to time be put up.

And if to pray, when there is occasion, with other christians be highly recommended by our Saviour himself, as more grateful, and likely to be more successful, when "two or three are met together;" if to do so with any two or three be so recommended, then most of all with those of our own family; because with them the occasions are more frequent, and may more easily be had, and the obligation is deeper and stronger; as any man, that considers what it is to have a family, and to have a charge lying upon him in reference thereto, cannot but apprehend.

But beside *direct* precepts; either referring to a family in particular; or enjoining both family-instruction and family-prayer to fellow-christians in general, which must be more obligatory in reference to those, with whom we have a particular concernment; besides these, I say, there are *virtual* precepts, or rules extendable unto this case, that may with great cogency and evidence of reason be applied to it; which suppose matter of precept in the case.

As, when the religion of families is spoken of as matter of divine acceptance: that implieth it to be agreeable to God's preceptive will, without which nothing could be acceptable. As when it is spoken by way of encomium, that "the voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous;" (ps. 118. 15.) the solemnities of religion there are most manifestly intended. Go to the dwelling of a righteous man, and there you may hear the voice of rejoicing and praise: it belongs to a righteous man as such, therefore it cannot be the common, carnal rejoicing of the wicked that is there meant: but it must be a holy, religious thanksgiving and praising of God; which is but a synecdochical expression of all the other parts of his worship; as if he had said, "You may so distinguish the houses and tabernacles of the righteous and unrighteous. You may pass the unrighteous man's dwelling, and there you hear swearing and blaspheming of God, it may be higher jollity than in the other: but in the other you hear the voice of joy and salvation: God is owned and taken notice of:"

So again, when we are told, what complacency God doth differently take in the solemnities of his own worship, (psalm, 87. 2.) "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." He is more honoured and glorified by the public solemnities of worship; and therefore doth take more complacency in them. Yet there is a complacency he also takes in the worship performed in the several habitations of his people. Why doth God love the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, but only because there was the seat of more public, solemn religion? But when it is said, he loveth them more; it is intimated that he loveth the dwellings of Jacob too; and upon the same account, because every such dwelling was to be looked upon as a seat of religion. For Zion was loved and delighted in under no other notion, and the several dwellings of Jacob are delighted in under the same notion; though less, as they are less public and solemn.

And again, threatenings and menaces do imply precepts, for violations of which they are given out. As that terrible one, Jer. 10. 25. Pour out thy fury, thine indignation, upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name. It is an imprecation; but what is imprecated by an inspired person, is denounced by that God that inspires him. It is very true indeed, that families are frequently taken in a larger sense, sometimes they signify nations: but both being put together in the text, it is manifestly the design of the Holy Ghost to notify to us irreligious families, composing and making up irreligious nations. For what is a profane, carnal nation and people made up of? Heathen and nations are all one. When nations then are first mentioned, and afterwards families; it is plain, they are mentioned as constituent parts of atheistical, ungodly, and irreligious nations. And when it is said, "Pour out thy fury upon such;" it signifies a denunciation of divine fury upon such. Dismal, horrid clouds of wrath hang over such families, that will be discharged in terrible destructive storms.

But beside what may be thus collected from precepts, which are expressly so, or virtual, implied ones; we shall proceed to evince this to you,

[2.] From recommended examples in Scripture; examples in reference to one or the other, or both of those parts of family-religion already mentioned, family-instruction, or family-prayer. And one, or the other, or sometimes both together, we find recommended examples of, as ancient as we have any records whatsoever.

The religion at first, that began so early in the world, that of sacrificing, which could never be without invocation, could

but be domestical : whether you look back as high as Abel, or look forward at your leisure. Do but peruse the short history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in all their several commorations and commigrations ; you hear of their settling no where, or removing no whither, but there was presently an altar built for worship, and for calling on the name of the Lord. You have a treatise on those passages, called "A family altar," written by a worthy servant of Christ, Mr. Oliver Heywood ; which would be of singular use for those who have a mind to peruse a short book on this subject. You read of two altars set up, in one chapter, upon a twofold removal of that great saint Abraham : at such a place he pitcheth, and there he builds an altar. And by and by to such a place he removes, and there he places an altar for calling on the name of the Lord, for the solemn worship of his family. Gen. 12. 7, 8. So you find it afterwards, to be with Isaac, and Jacob in their removals, or in their settlings, this way or that, or in this place or that.

That instance also of Job is very considerable to this purpose ; who, in the absence of his sons and daughters offers sacrifices for them, Job. 1. 5. Which could never be unaccompanied with solemn invocation and calling upon God. And thus, it is said, he did continually. It was a stated course with him ; he did not omit it, when they were absent ; for he must be understood to have a great family about him even then. And it is implied to have been his stated course, whether his children were with him or not ; he kept up a course of family-religion all along.

That action of David, though I do not find it taken notice of by others, seems to me to be mighty observable to this purpose ; that in the history given us of his bringing home of the ark to the place which he had appointed for it, we find how greatly he was transported with the solemnity of that action and undertaking. But when all that was over, which was public and solemn, we are told, that he retired at length to bless his household, 2 Sam. 6, 20. He went home to bless his household. Nothing is more probable, than that this was a stated course with him ; and that he had so contrived and ordered the work of that public solemnity, as that it might not interfere with the worship of his family : and therefore, amidst all the great pompous triumph, wherein he was more publicly engaged, upon this account he bethinks himself ; "Well now my hour of prayer is come at home ;" and so the matter was prudently ordered, that that solemnity being over, he might return home to perform the ordinary duty that was to be done there, that is, to bless his household, and call upon the name of the Lord there. If you compare this with

that which was his declared resolution, in psalm 101. 2. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way ;—I will walk within my house with a perfect heart ;" "I will keep an even steady course, there shall be no baulks, no ups and downs in my way in my family ;" undoubtedly meaning a way of religion. If you compare, I say, that resolution, with his sudden bethinking himself, when he had been engaged in that great solemnity but now mentioned, "Now the time is come that I must go home and bless my house ;" it appears to have been a stated thing with him.

If from thence you look further to that great instance of Daniel ; when he was, though a great prince in another land, yet an exile from his own ; and that terrible and severe interdict was published, that for thirty days no man should pray to God or man, but to the prince of those countries only ; (a snare purposely laid for Daniel's life,) you read, that he went on in his course, as he was wont to do, as it is expressly said ; and no doubt but those wretched conspirators against his life knew his course, otherwise they could not have laid this snare for him. And how should they know it ? It is said, Dan. 6. 10. He went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks unto his God, as he did aforetime. It was a stated course with him. And that this must be family-prayer, and the ordinary religion of his household, is the most reasonable supposition imaginable. For otherwise, if it were secret closet-prayer, how should it be known to have been his course before ? and how should they be able to accuse him now ? But consider him as a great prince in a foreign country, and as having a family, and how heroic and generous a resolution he had taken up, and with how holy a fortitude and bravery of spirit, to own God against that insolent decree of the wicked creatures who would arrogate that honour to the prince that was only due to God. Considering all these things, it is with the greatest reason imaginable to be supposed, that this was a stated course with him of family-religion. He resolved, that his worship should be, as it was aforetime, open in his house. And thereupon the advantage was taken against him.

The instance of the centurion is very observable, and observed by many, in Acts 10. 2. He is said to be a devout man, a religious man, that feared God, (that is an ordinary expression to signify worship ; he was a worshipper of God,) with all his house. He was a worshipping person, and his family a worshipping family : "And he prayed unto God alway." Afterwards you read in the chapter, that at the time when the an-

gel appeared to him, he was praying in his house, (ver. 30.) house being put for household, as is ordinary. He was praying in his family in his ordinary course; and there he had the benign appearance of that kind messenger from heaven, to direct him to the way, by which he might come to a more distinct knowledge of the Mediator, and of worshipping God in Christ. According to the light he had, and the sincerity that God had given him in proportion thereunto, his acceptance above was declared before. But God resolved to help him, in the method and way which he most approved, unto more distinct notices; and these he is directed how to come by, even at the time when he was engaged in his domestic performances of religion in his house.

We need not farther to insist for the eviction of this truth in the general, that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion. It were easy, if necessary, to add to all these considerations, (and it ought to have some weight,) the accounts that we otherwise have of the practice of the primitive church, in those earlier times of it whereof we have any account, since the completing of the canon of Scripture. That is, we are told by some of the ancients, and in some of the early centuries, of the twofold social prayer that was in common use among them, family-prayer and church-prayer, or prayer in their church-assemblies. We are told, what things they were wont to insist upon in prayer. Besides the spiritual blessings, which they continually and daily sought, and apprehended themselves to need, they were wont to pray for the lives of the emperors that ruled over them, though they were then pagans. And this (saith that ancient author,) was their constant practice, both in their prayers in public assemblies, and in their own houses.

Having gone through what I thought fit to offer in proof of the substance of family-religion, that there ought to be such a thing; I shall only hint this to you for a close; That the great thing, which will either facilitate or obstruct a general compliance with the mind of God in this matter, will be the consideration that men shall have of their families, that is, whether they will consider them as constitutions for this world, or for the world to come. If you can but agree with yourselves, under which of these notions to look upon your families; accordingly your compliance with the mind of God in this matter will either be facile or difficult.

It is true, we are to have a very distinct consideration of the nature of societies, from the ends of them. There are societies, that in their design, and consequently in their nature, are purely civil: and others, that in their design, and conse-

quently in their nature and constitution, are purely sacred. Of the former sort are kingdoms and nations and incorporate towns, and the like ; they are in their very nature, because they are from their ends, purely civil. There are those that are purely sacred, as churches ; the very end and design, upon which they are collected, is worship and religion. But now families are the elements of both these sorts of societies ; that is, both churches and commonwealths are made up of families. Therefore both these must meet in a family, religion, and civil and secular business ; for the other societies, some whereof are purely sacred, others purely civil, do arise out of families. Persons are elements of families ; families are the elements, of which both churches and kingdoms or commonwealths are composed and made up. And as the one sort of these is purely civil, the other purely sacred ; that which is elementary unto both, must be both. And therefore now, when any come to turn this matter in their thoughts, “ I am the head of a family ; but what sort of society is my family ? Is it made purely for this world, or for the world to come ? ” Sure, where the consideration of both worlds meet, the other world should be superior or uppermost ; and therefore all things must be measured there with subserviency and reference to that. But if any will say, “ No ; families are made only for this world ; ” then I would ask, What is this world made for ? Is it made for nothing ? Or is it made for itself, to centre in itself, and to be its own end ? You can never avoid it, but that families must be supremely and ultimately made for the other world ; and then they are made for religion principally and chiefly. And no man can behave himself well in any station or relation in a family, that doth not let this thought lie deep in his mind ; “ My family, as well as others, is a constitution made for religion, as well as for other businesses.” For where both meet, that must certainly be principal.

SERMON IV.*

IN speaking of family-religion, the method proposed was, to evince the obligation to it, in reference to the substance of the thing, and then in reference to the frequency of it.

I. To the substance of the thing; that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion. The two last discourses † have been employed in the proof of this. We proceed to speak somewhat also,

II. To the more doubted frequency of such religious exercises, as lie within the compass of families, or whereof families are to be the stated seats: how often, or at what seasons such family-worship ought to be. And in reference to this,

1. I would suggest some few things, by way of preparation. As,

(1.) That it will greatly concern us all to get an habitual spirituality inwrought into the temper of our souls, in order to our making a right judgment of this matter; when, at what time, how often we ought to apply ourselves to the exercises of such family-religion. If there be a frame of spirit suitable to the general rules of practical religion and godliness, the determination of this matter will be very easy. But if there be a prevailing carnality, nothing will be more difficult. And let me in this but appeal to your own reason, to that common understanding that belongs to us as we are an intelligent sort of creatures: that is, you would be loath in other instances to

* Preached December 31, 1693. † See page 392, &c.

commit any cause, wherein you are concerned, especially if your all were concerned in it, to the judgment of an enemy, if you could help it. But "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" not only an enemy, but enmity itself. And I beseech you, do you think, that an enemy to God can be your friend? Therefore let not a carnal mind make a judgment in this case; whatsoever you do, let it not be judged by that measure; but labour to get an habitual spirituality inwrought into your souls, and then the judgment of this case will lie very easy.

(2.) We should look upon family-religion, not merely under the notion of a duty, and as imposed; but as a privilege and a singular vouchsafement of grace, that there may be such a thing; that God will be invocated, or even mentioned in our families, in the families of such wretched creatures as we, who inhabit the dark and dismal region of this lower world; that God will have worship ascend and go up to him from off our earth, and out of our houses and families. Look upon it as a marvellous vouchsafement of grace; and that will greatly facilitate the determination of this case also. And nothing can be more opprobrious to us than not to think so: that, when God doth so far vouchsafe to let his tabernacle be with men on earth; "Every tabernacle of yours shall be my tabernacle; if you consent, if you do not shut me out, you shall no where have a tabernacle but what shall be mine; I, the high and lofty One that inhabit eternity, am content to cohabit with you, and to have your house for my sanctuary." What a vouchsafement is this! and how opprobrious a thing not to count it so!

It hath been accounted so, even in the very Pagan world. A divine presence, to have a *præsto numen*, a *numen* at hand and ready, how great a privilege hath it been reckoned! In the dark and dismal days of popery, when that hath been *regnant*, what a terrible thing hath it been accounted to excommunicate a nation; to put it under an interdict, that there should be no religion in that nation? Our own records tell us, how such a thing hath been understood and resented in this land in former days. And if we look farther and farther back into the days of paganism, I remember Cæsar in his commentaries * tells us, that the ancient Gauls did reckon

* Si quis aut privatus aut publicus, eorum (nempe druidum) decreto non steterit, sacrificiis interdicunt. Hæc pœna apud eos est gravissima. Quibus ita est interdictum, ii numero inpiorum ac sceleratorum habentur; iis omnes decedunt, aditum eorum sermonemque defugiunt, ne quid ex contagione incommodi accipiant; neque iis petentibus jus redditur, neque honos ullus communicatur. Cæsar. de Bell. Gallic, L. 6, sect. 13, edit. Cler.

no more terrible punishment could be put upon them, than to be interdicted the sacrifices. And by that means it was, that their *Arch-flamens* ruled over them ; they were mere absolute governors among that people, because if they would not be prescribed to and directed by them in every case, if they would not suffer them to take up all controversies among them, they would presently forbid them the sacrifices ; than which no penalty was reckoned more, nor any so grievous.

Now let us consider the matter so. What if instead of being bidden to pray in our families, we should be forbidden to pray in them ! Make but that fearful supposition, to see how it will relish with you. Suppose there should be a particular interdict upon your house ; suppose by some special signification of the mind of God from heaven it should be said, " I will allow all the neighbouring houses to call upon me, but I will have no worship out of your house ; let all the rest in the street worship me, and I will hear and accept them, but from your house, I will accept no sacrifice, I will hear no prayer." What a terrible doom were this ! What a dark and horrid cloud would be drawn over that habitation, if it should be said, " Here shall be no prayer, here shall be no mention of the name of God !" So that, as in a like case represented to us in reference to the people of the Jews, the poor forlorn members of that family should say, " We may not make mention of the name of the Lord." Amos 6. 10. What a dismal thing were this ! Labour but to get your souls possessed with the apprehension, that the liberty of family-worship is a great privilege ; and let that be forelaid in your minds, when you come to determine with yourselves about the frequency, how often we shall solace ourselves with this gracious vouchsafement of God from heaven unto us. Then it will be no hard thing to determine. And take this also,

(3.) That in reference to the determination of this matter, the same consideration is to be had of family-religion, that we formerly told you was to be had of religion in general ; that is, that it ought to be considered, either as a homage to God, or as an advantage to ourselves. And so it will be easy hence to determine, that the exercise of family-religion ought to be so frequent, as religion considered under this twofold notion doth require ; as frequent as a homage to God is to be paid, and as our own spiritual advantage is to be sought : as frequently as that can be in consistency with the other necessary affairs of human life. For indeed nothing is plainer, and that therefore must with less hesitancy be granted, than that nothing can be at that time necessary, when that which is inconsistent with it

is truly necessary. That must be acknowledged. But then there is a great deal of caution to be used in judging of this necessity, that shall exclude for this or that time so great a thing as a solemn exercise of religion out of a family. It must be a great thing, that shall prevail to exclude that.

But let me ask myself the question ; “ I am one that oweth a homage to God, and so doth my family. When do I not owe it ? And when doth my family not owe it ; so that if I have opportunity, consistent with the other necessary occasions of human life, that opportunity should not be taken ? ” And whereas religion, and so family-religion, is a means of advantage to ourselves and them, as well as a homage to God ; when can it be said, I stand in no need of the exercises of religion, or that those under my care do not, when those exercises can be had consistently with the other necessary occasions of human life ? These things being premonished,

2. I shall now offer somewhat by way of determination of the propounded case. As,

(1.) Nothing is plainer, than that the exercises of family-religion ought to be daily. That seems out of all question. Every day will I bless thee. Psalm 145. 2. A synecdochical expression of religion ; and that cannot be understood for any reason reaching a particular person, which will not reach a family too. And so the same thing is to be said to that in psalm 141. 2. Let my prayer be set before thee as incense ; (that was stated solemn prayer ;) and the uplifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice. That is ; every evening let it go up as incense. That was a *juge sacrificium*, a daily solemnity. So look to that direction given us by our Lord, to pray for our *daily* bread, day by day. He tieth us not indeed to the use of those very words. So the instruction being given occasionally, plainly enough signifieth, that he did not intend this direction as a form ; but that he directs it only as a summary or a form to be used with Christian wisdom and understanding, in enlarging upon the particulars contained in that prayer, and to guide and direct ourselves hereby in our solemn addresses unto God. Though also the use of these very words, as they lie, no body can doubt to be lawful ; yet, that they are enjoined, and so made necessary, there is little reason to affirm. But however, take them as a general direction in reference unto prayer ; they signify that the things to be prayed for are to be daily prayed for. “ Give us this day our daily bread : ” this day. At the same time, when we pray for all other things contained in that prayer, we are to pray too for daily bread. And that this is

meant of social prayer, and that this direction is given to the disciples with reference to their praying together, to let them know what things they should insist upon in prayer; is made more than probable by the form of speech. For, when our Saviour was directing secret or closet prayer, Mat. 6. 6. then he saith *thou*: "Thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door," &c. But when he cometh to give this direction concerning prayer, he saith, *Ye*. He speaks to them in the plural number; and directs them to speak in the plural number, "Our father," &c. And therefore, that it was social prayer, about which he giveth this direction; the prayer of such as could daily pray together; that seems most evident; and therefore also that such exercises of religion ought to be daily.

(2.) Such exercises of religion ought to be every day more than once. We read sometimes of thrice in a day. Psalm 55. 17. Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice. This in all likelihood must refer too to family-prayer. He speaks of crying with his voice, a loud voice. And so the before-mentioned instance of Daniel, which seems most likely to be meant of family-religion, the prayer or religion of his family; was with him thrice a day. And indeed so it cannot but be in religious families; that is, that at least at noon there will be solemn invocation of God in reference to the use of his creatures; which, the apostle saith, "are good, if they be received with thanksgiving, but they are sanctified by the word of God and prayer." 1 Tim. 4. 4, 5. There must be prayer to sanctify the creatures; or else they are unholy things to you, profane things. It is unhallowed meat and drink. And therefore,

(3.) I doubt not, it is with a great deal of reason, and from Scripture-light too to be determined, that the exercises of religion ought to be statedly twice a day; that is, with greater solemnity. This is spoken of as a most comely and becoming thing, a thing that carries its own goodness along with it, (psalm 92. 1, 2.) "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high; (giving of thanks being one essential part of prayer :) to shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." There can be no reason assigned, why this should concern one particular person, more than why it should concern every person: no more, why it should concern the master of a family alone, than those under his care. If the reason of the thing extend to a family as such, the thing itself ought to extend to a family as such. That is, with serious and apprehensive

minds and spirits to convene and meet together, to give God his due acknowledgment for his loving-kindness every morning, and his faithfulness every night.

And you see, how the Psalmist represents this case in psalm 42. S. The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. Observe, how his *νυκθημεραι*, his days and nights, were composed and made up, by the continual meeting together of God's loving-kindness, and of his prayer and song every day, and every night, morning and evening; so it is to be understood. "Thy loving-kindness, and my prayer and praise shall meet one another. So shall my mornings and evenings be continually made up of that grateful contexture, of mercy and loving-kindness on thy part, and of prayer and praise on mine." But this cannot concern a particular person upon any reason, but upon which it will equally concern his family, that religious exercises should be there in a stated and continual course.

I may farther reason this matter by some few considerations.

Suppose any will admit, (which in itself is sufficiently evident,) that it is a very reasonable thing and manifestly the mind of God, that there should be daily exercises of religion in our families; then I would fain know, which should be excluded, if you would have one excluded? The Lord saith, morning and night; which would you have excluded? The morning, or the evening sacrifice?

Would you exclude the morning exercise of religion? Pray how dare you think of that? Would not you desire God's blessing on your family this day? Would you not have the labours of the several members of it to be prospered and succeeded this day? Ask yourselves seriously that question; do not you desire a blessing should descend this morning upon your family as such? Again, do not you know, that this world is a place of snares and temptations? How dare you adventure your sons and daughters and servants into the world, without praying down a blessing upon them, before they go forth or set about their business? Suppose a disaster should happen, suppose a member of your family should be drawn into some scandalous wickedness; would it not be an uncomfortable reflection, "I ventured them out without family-prayer; see what comes of it. Here is a blot and disgrace brought upon my family; was not this owing to my self-confidence, to neglect of God? was it not, because I was content to let mine go out abroad unblest? I forgot, that the world, the persons or things that they might have to do with, were

all full of snares ; this was not considered and taken to heart, and God hath let such a blast befall me or mine upon this account."

Or would you omit the evening exercise of religion in your family, of one sort and another? How can you think of that? Do you need none to watch over you this night? Doth not your house need a better keeper than you can be, especially when you are asleep; the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth? when we dwell in the midst of continual dangers, as we have so frequent experience; when some, that went to bed possessed of comfortable habitations, are unthought and outed of all by the morning? It is not pretended, that family-prayer or family-religion will be a certain protection of your habitations from such disasters; as experience hath from time to time shewn: but I would appeal to you concerning the difference; suppose such a calamity to befall a religious family, and suppose it to befall an impious ungodly family. On the one hand, "My family hath been the seat of religion; I have desired, that God might be served and honoured there: of this I have been studious to the uttermost;" How free and easy is the way of access to God, when such a person is not affrighted by guilt, and the horrors of an amazed conscience! But on the other side, to be forced to say; "I can look for no relief from God in this case, for I have neglected him, I have forsaken him and banished him my house and habitation; he had no abode or dwelling with me, no acknowledgment or worship from me and mine:" What will this issue in? But if there be no such bar in the way between God and us; "Now my habitation is consumed, and turned into flames and ashes, I have no dwelling; but thanks be to God, the secret of the divine presence lieth open to me; I can go to him and say, Lord, thou hast been thy people's habitation through all generations. I shall never be destitute of a dwelling, as long as I have such a God to go to, and may solace myself in his love." For he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. How unsolicitous will that heart be, that finds itself possessed of a dwelling in the divine love! That love will carry through all the straits and difficulties of time, and provide richly for us in an immense eternity that shall ensue. This makes a vast difference betwixt one that serveth the Lord and one that serveth him not.

Farther; How are we directed by the course of nature itself? Do you think that those diurnal alterations of day and night carry no signification with them to an intelligent sort of creatures? When it is so inculcated to us in Scripture, what sa-

cred things those ordinances of day and night are, and the steadiness of their succession to one another; what can this intend, but to give us a measure as to the exercises of religion? Why else should this be so much insisted on, and we be called to fix our eye and take more special notice of those two great luminaries in this world of ours, "the sun that rules by day, and the moon that rules by night?" We are taught by nature itself to shape our other affairs accordingly. "Thou makest darkness, and it is night:—The sun ariseth;—Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening." Psalm 104. 20, 22, 23. May he indeed do so, and shall he not take God along with him? And when the return of night calls him back from his affairs; ought he not then to be put in mind, who must be his keeper while he slumbers and sleeps, even that Keeper that never slumbers nor sleeps?

That it might be more expressly signified unto us, how nature may and should be a measure unto us of religion, as to this thing; do but take notice of that passage in Amos 5. 8. Seek him, (though these words, "seek him," are not in the Hebrew text in this verse, yet they are in the words but a little before, in several verses, and it is plain ought to be repeated or understood here, as the sense itself dictateth: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live; Seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba; Seek the Lord and ye shall live; seek him, that made the seven stars and orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night," &c. Seek him that doth so and so; what is the meaning of that? Seek him, because he doth so and so; seek him under that notion, as it is he that maketh the day dark with night, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning. What stupid, insensible creatures shall we be, if so wonderful a change doth not instruct us! If such a change were not common, it would be a subject of the greatest wonder to us. But that is the infirmity of our minds, that great things are little regarded, because they are common. That there should be that steady course kept in nature, as to make so vast a change in the world within the space of twenty-four hours, as the vicissitudes of day and night, of light and darkness; that we should have the brightness of an orient sun illustrating our hemisphere, and that within so many hours it is gone, and the shadow of death covers it; certainly this should set all religious minds upon adoring that Author of nature, that doth this in so steady a course, and in a way so unspeakably above all human conception, and which makes so many indeterminable controversies and disputes among the

wisest philosophers, that are never like to be decided as long as this world lasts ; particularly, whether it be the earth that successively moves to the sun, or whether it be the sun that is whirled about the earth. The latter of these is so unapprehensible a thing, that the sun should run so vast a circle in so little a space of time, that it hath made many very considering men more to incline to the other opinion. But that we should be compassed about daily, once in twenty-four hours, with the strange vicissitudes of day and night, and not be disposed thereupon to adoration, is a most unaccountable thing ; and will speak the inhabitants of this earth to be as stupid, as the earth on which they dwell.

But the idolatry of pagans will be a testimony against christians, if it should be so. What tempted them to that idolatrous notion of worshipping the sun and moon, but that they thought them to be a sort of deities, from whom they received such a continual course of favours, that they thought they did owe continual adoration to them thereupon ? If they falsely thought so, how truly and justly should we do what they have thought, if we reckon that the God of heaven and earth, of sun and moon, and of the whole creation, doth in such wisdom and in such kindness and benignity to us provide, that there should be so necessary an alteration, as this of light and darkness in so continued a course ?

What then doth this require and call for from us ? To seek the Lord upon this account, the Lord that maketh the day dark with night, and that turneth the shadow of death into the morning. He doth even impose upon us those daily acknowledgments and acts of worship morning and evening, by the very course and current of nature itself, as he is the Author and God of nature. And wonder not, that the light and law of nature is so often appealed unto in this case. It is what we find the apostle does in a matter of far less import, than this that is now before us ; when he speaks about the business of hair. 1 Cor. 11. 14. Surely we are to act according to the unerring plain dictates of nature, in so great and important a matter as this is, much more.

I might farther add upon all this that general precept, Phil. 4. 8. "Whatsoever things are honest, *comely*, whatsoever things are lovely, of good report, think on these things." What a lovely thing is a praying, orderly family ! a family, where religion is kept up in a stated course, so as that that course is as constant as the course of day and night ! It is not left to us as a mere arbitrary thing, whether we will do things lovely, comely, honest and of good report, yea or no ; but as a necessary

thing, founded upon necessary reasons. And therefore to be unconcerned and indifferent, whether those of our family (if we have families,) do things so necessary, or not, is a contradiction in terms; for it is to say, that which is necessary is not necessary; or, it is an indifferent thing, whether that which is necessary be done or not done.

SERMON V*.

HAVING endeavoured to evince to you, that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion; and then to show you, what we were to conceive and practice, as to the frequency of the exercises of it, or when and at what times it ought to be performed; I would farther speak to a *question* or two relating to this matter, and answer one or two *objections*, and so shut up all with some *Use*.

There are some *questions* that occur, which may require some consideration.

Question 1. Some have desired to be informed, “Whether in case of the absence or sickness of a husband from or in the family, it be incumbent on the wife to keep up family-duty in such a case?” And the case is the same as to widows, or others of that sex, who are sole governesses of families.

Answer. It must be said in general to this, that one rule cannot be suited to all cases. There may be very great variety, as circumstances differ. But,

1. Nothing is plainer, than that while the conjugal relatives remain, the female relation hath a real part in the government of the family. That is plainly enough asserted in 1 Tim. 5. 14. that it is the woman’s part to “guide the house.” The word *οικονομῆσαι*, to have a despotic power in the family, a go-

Preached January 14th. 1693.

verning power ; which must be solely in her in the absence or failure of the other relative : and that must by no means be abandoned or quitted. And whereas all power and all order is from God, it cannot be denied or disowned or laid aside without an injury to him.

2. Hereupon, if there be in a family a prudent pious son, or a prudent pious man-servant, who may be assigned to this work ; it may fitly enough be done by such a one by her appointment. And so the authority that belongs to her in her station, is preserved, and the thing done. That such a work as that is may be assigned to another, is out of all doubt, and ought to be so, where it may most fitly and most duly be so. And none question the fitness of assigning such a work stably to another, in such families where persons are kept on purpose for the discharge of family-duties.

3. It is possible, there may be families, that do entirely at present consist of those that are of the female sex : and concerning them there is no question.

4. Where the family is more numerous, and consists of the male sex, of whom none are fit or willing to undertake that business, and it cannot be done by the governess with decency or to edification ; in that case she is to follow the example of Esther, (a very laudable one,) with her maidens and younger children still to keep up to this worship in her family ; and, as much as in her lies, to warn and charge the rest, that they be not omisive for their part, (though they do not concur with them,) together or severally in calling on the name of the Lord daily.

Question II. A second question, that occurs in this case, is, "Whether, where there is no competent ability to perform such a duty, as that of family-prayer, with decency and edifyingness ; it be fit to make use of helps, the preconceived words of others?"

Answer. As to that, the matter seems to me so plain, that we need make no long discourse about it. I make no question at all, but that the substance of every duty is to take place of circumstance. It is better that the duty be done, than that upon the account of a mere circumstance it should be omitted and let alone. And there are useful helps, such as "The Practice of Piety" and other good books contain in them, which may fitly be made use of for that purpose ; provided, that they be not rested in, or that there be not a design of taking up there.

But persons in that case are more to study the Scriptures, the excellencies and attributes of the divine nature, the natures and offices of Christ ; to acquaint themselves with the parti-

cular office of the Holy Ghost, as he is the Spirit of grace and supplication; and to study their own hearts more, and to consider what are their true necessities. And in time, if people do conscientiously labour to make themselves acquainted with these things, and especially to get a sense upon their own hearts of their own true and great spiritual necessities; that will easily furnish them with matter, and matter will dictate words. Every one can tell, how eloquent necessity is wont to make beggars, that are pinched with want and hunger; they do not use to want words to represent their case. And for a more special help in this matter, if any such as make it a matter of doubt, would but allow themselves the leisure and give themselves the trouble, (but shall any call it a trouble? they should not account it so, if they did the thing;) to peruse Bishop Wilkins's treatise about "The Gift of Prayer;" they would there see, not only what the judgment of so great a man was, concerning the best and most eligible way of managing our addresses to God in prayer; but how also an ability may be obtained through the grace and blessing of God, for applying ourselves in the name and on the behalf of others to God in prayer.

But there is yet an *objection* or two, that needs to be considered.

Objection, I. Some will say perhaps, "That they *want time*, and that their necessary secular affairs cannot admit of time for a stated course of family-worship, morning and evening." As there can be no reason, as you have heard, alleged for the one of these times, that will not be as weighty for the other; to this I have several things to say in answer,

1. It would be a very great piece of justice, if such, as are wont so to object, would but represent the case, as truly it is; that is, that they would rather say, they want hearts, than that they want time. Undoubtedly, where there is a bent of heart right set in this matter, time will be found; it will not be a difficulty to find it.

2. I would fain know of such, why they do not object too, that they cannot find time to have solemn meals in their families, set meals; that they cannot find time for eating or drinking, no, nor for sleeping: But are these things more necessary than religion? What is become of their understanding? How forlorn an understanding is that grown, that can apprehend a necessity for set and appointed seasons for repast and the repairing of natural decays, and cannot apprehend a necessity of constant family-religion, or seem to think of that as a matter less necessary? Will they pretend to believe, that they have souls, immortal spirits about them; and that an immortal

mind or spirit is a more valuable thing than a clod of clay? Do we need to make speeches to christians or to men for such purposes as these? Therefore I add again,

3. It is very true, that nothing is at that time necessary, when somewhat inconsistent therewith is truly necessary. That is a concession, that must be stated and established, for it cannot be shaken. And therefore we are to take our measures, not against it, but by it, and according to it. For in morality it is impossible that necessities should be repugnant one to another, any more than that truths can; that one duty to be practised should be contrary to another duty, than that one truth to be believed should be contrary to another truth. They are all of a family, of a kind and alliance, and very easily reconcilable with one another. But as we formerly had occasion to mind you, so I must remind you, that it is a good man's character, that he "orders his affairs with discretion." If men will do this, they will then find out ways and methods, how to reconcile their important necessary affairs with one another.

There are cases, wherein even a religious duty itself must yield and give place to other necessary occurrences. It may not only in some cases be lawful, but a duty, to intermit the course of family-duty in the ordinary season thereof. As, suppose a person be taken with a sudden, surprising fit, that endangers life, and requires the present attendance of all the house; or suppose my house be on fire, or my neighbour's house. The strict observance of the religion of the sabbath-day was among the Jews dispensed with upon a less occasion, when there was but an ox or a sheep to be pulled out of a ditch.

But if any will pretend such necessary occasions to be constant, then the pretence overthrows itself; that they must constantly or in an ordinary course exclude religion out of their families upon account of their constant or ordinary secular business. If this be pretended, the very pretence sheweth it to be a false necessity, or the false pretence of a necessity; and so is a pretence, that doth overthrow itself even in the allegation. This is none of those cases, to which that great maxim is applicable, that "God will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Such cases there are; but these cannot be constant: for then there could be no such thing as sacrifice; that is, religion upon these terms must quite be thrown out of doors and out of the world.

4. I would appeal to yourselves, or to ordinary observation, whether it be not evident that there are many instances in former and latter time, that make it manifest, that there may be diligence in a calling, and great success upon such diligence;

and yet no exclusion of family-religion, but that kept up in great constancy and order? I believe you, or most of you, can instance in many such observable cases. And if I should instance them to you, many of you would upon knowledge consent and concur with me.

I doubt not, but that many of you have seen the life of that famous man Mr. Ignatius Jordan, who fifty or sixty years ago was a magistrate and sometimes mayor of the noted city of Exeter. I mention him; because, besides his extant life, I have had opportunities to converse with some, that lived a considerable time in his family; and who did assure me, that his daily course was to go to bed early, and to take care that his family should do so too. Then generally he was up first of all the house; usually at four o'clock in the morning, both winter and summer. Two hours he commonly spent alone in his secret devotions. About six o'clock, it was his usual way to call his family together, and to spend a considerable time in the serious exercises of religion among them: and so all went with great order about their several affairs and businesses about seven. A very signal instance of the easy reconcilableness (by the use of discretion and prudence,) of religion with secular business! And an instance too, how discernible a blessing did ensue and follow upon all; so as to leave it no matter of objection against religion, that it must impoverish the families into which it comes.

Nor should I doubt the concurrence of more of you, if I should instance in the known conduct of alderman Ashurst*. I have had opportunity myself to know much of the order of his family in this respect, as to the daily exercises of religion in it. And I think his posterity left behind are a sufficient proof to you, that religion doth not beggar a family.

I mention these instances, not as if I thought an opulent condition in the world to be any considerable part of the reward of religion, or any constant reward of it. That were to dishonour religion, to think that we should need to mention so mean a thing, as outward and worldly prosperity, wealth and riches, as the recompence and reward of religion. There are much greater things to be mentioned, the secret blessing of God upon a man's spirit: the hoped blessing, that may descend upon one's relatives: the peace, that a man shall have in his own bosom, from the consideration of his not having the blood of souls on his head, the blood of children, and the blood of servants, for not having taken care of their souls: the instruc-

* The father of Sir Henry Ashurst, Bart. and of Sir William Ashurst, Knt. Lord-Mayor of London in 1693, when these sermons were preached.

tive good remembrance, that such a one will leave behind him ; which may be of use to others, when he is dead and gone : the glory, that he brings to God : the eternal recompences that sincere religion will find at the last : the present pleasure and satisfaction, that a man will have, while he survives, where God blesseth his endeavours ; and where he can see godly children springing up under the influence of godliness practised and kept up in the family ; or a godly servant becoming or made such under his eye, though it was not always so ; it may be, he may see such a child or servant gone out of his family, and planting other families. What a comfort is it to the heart of a man in such a case, to see the godly, praying parent and master of such another family ; who must say, he carried his religion out of my family, and that God blessed the worship and religion of my house so to season his spirit, that I can reckon such or such a religious family springing out of mine ! What a comfort is this !

But what I speak of worldly emolument, (as sometimes by the especial blessing of God a consequent, though not a necessary or constant consequent of family-religion,) hath this farther design—That if this be the case with any of you, that you are descended of godly parents, and sprung out of families where religion was kept up, and there is a blessing descended upon you in outward respects also ; if God hath enlarged your portion as to the things of this life, and with that blessing hath blessed you indeed ; then I reckon the mention of such instances may be useful to such as you in this respect ; that you may take encouragement and understand your engagement from thence to keep up the religion which you find hath not been a useless disadvantageous thing to your family.—Religion hath not dishonoured your families, nor you : do not you dishonour it ; be not ashamed of the religion of your fathers, who have gone before you in this way and course. In the last place as to the objection of want of time, I would add, that

5. It ought deeply to be considered, whether more time might not be redeemed, not only from such occasions as are in a degree necessary, but from such as are altogether unnecessary ; and this without any prejudice to health ? Where such an allegation is used and stood upon, certainly one half hour without any great prejudice might be gained from sleep by rising so much the earlier in the morning. But as that may be said to be a gaining and sparing of time from that which is necessary, how much more may be gained from that which is unnecessary ? And about that I must appeal to yourselves ; I know not other people's circumstances, but every one is sup-

posed to know his own : and so yourselves know, whether some time might not be spared from the coffee-house, or from unseasonable visits, at that hour of the day that would be most fit for the religion and worship of your family. I can but appeal to yourselves, whether it may not be so.

I know, it may possibly be alleged in a particular case ; if it be asked, "Why were you not at a more seasonable hour about the exercises of religion in your family?" Why, "I was obliged to observe such an appointment with such a one about business in a coffee-house or a tavern." But I would inquire ; Is it necessary, that this must be constantly so, or more ordinarily so? Or can it not be provided, that such meetings might be at more seasonable hours, so as not to exclude family-duty in its proper season ; that is, to occasion it either to be quite laid aside, or (which may be as culpable,) to be deferred to so late an hour of the day or night, (for the greatest danger of this kind is in the evening,) till every one naturally is more disposed to sleep, than to prayer or to hear God's word read or opened to them? Might it not be managed otherwise? And then may I not appeal to you, whether this be not an affront to the majesty of God? According to that which is urged by the prophet Malachi, (chap. 1. 13.) "When ye bring that which was torn, and the lame and the sick for an offering, should I accept this at your hands? saith the Lord." Or, as in ver. 8. "Is not such a sacrifice evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee?" It is to offer God an affront, instead of a sacrifice; the worship of a carcase, instead of a living sacrifice or service. It speaks your contempt of the divine Majesty, when you dare ordinarily presume to do so; instead of that reverence which ought to animate all your worship.

And therefore about this, no other course can be taken by one who shall preach to you upon such an occasion, but only to leave you to serious communing about this matter between God and your own souls. Bring the case before him, and consider your rule, and consider your judge; for you are not to be final judges; nor are you to judge arbitrarily in a subordinate way, but by rule.

Consider, I say, the rules you are to judge by, what such laws as these lay upon us. Whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10. 31. Can you go to God in this case, and say, "Lord, I appeal to thee, who knowest all things, whether I was not about business at the coffee-house or tavern, which did more tend to glorify thee, than inspecting my family would then have done; than reading out of thy holy word or calling upon thy name would then have done."

We are required to do all that we do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Col. 3. 17. A most awful thought that ! This is to run through our lives, to do all we do in the name of our Lord Jesus. Nor is it an unreasonable thing, that this law should be laid upon us. For by whose vouchsafement and procurement is it, that we have a being in this world? It is "by him that all things consist." This world, if it had not been for him, would have been pulled in pieces about the ears of its inhabitants many a year ago. It was said concerning Joseph, exalted in that high trust in Egypt; and it was said to him by the prince upon the throne, "Without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt." Gen. 41. 44. If God say so concerning him, of whom Joseph was but a type, our glorious blessed Lord; "The creation is given to thee, it might have been all made to vanish into nothing long ago, but it is now devolved into thy hands; be thou absolute Arbitrer of life and death, and of all concernments to this whole creation; All power is given to thee in heaven and in earth:" This being the state of the case, it is not an unreasonable law that I now mention, that whatsoever ye do in word or deed, ye should do all in the name of Christ; you have nothing to do in this world, but in his name. Now can you go by this rule, and say, "Lord, it was in the name of Jesus Christ, that I thought myself more concerned to mind such and such businesses at a public house at such an hour in the evening, rather than the business of my family in the exercises of religion; rather than in reasoning, and in opening and urging the Scriptures to them, and calling on thy name with them?" Let these things be considered in the fear of God; and not like persons that mean to trifle in matters, wherein God will not trifle with us one day. I need to do no more, than to leave such cases to a communing between God and your own souls. If you will let the matter be heard there, it will bring the case before God, and the appeal will be made to him about it. But if you will judge the matter without hearing, and as the sole judges, when you are no way so but in subordination; if you will have it determined finally by an improper judgment, without debate, without examining the matter *pro* and *con*: this argueth a bad cause and a guilty conscience; when you dare not try the matter between God and your own souls; and dare not to see how it will go there, when there is none to audit the account but He and you.

I would fain have you consider the matter in this light day by day in such cases; that, when you go to take your rest at night, you may lie down and sleep in peace; not because you do not consider the state of your case, whether you have done

your duty or not ; but because you have ; and so can appeal to God about it, that you have done according to the obligations of the Christian law, lying upon you in reference to yourself and in reference to yours.

Objection II. Some may say, "It is true they begin to apprehend and admit a conviction, that it is very reasonable and fit, there should be religion in families, even as such ; but they know not how to master the great difficulty of *beginning*." It hath been hitherto an unwonted thing with them ; and if the truth of the matter should be confessed, it would be plainly this, that they are ashamed to be taken notice of by their relatives and dependants, as those who have admitted a conviction that they have been hitherto in the wrong. They think it will be an owning of a sort of guilt in their omission hitherto, when they shall set this on foot as a new course.

Answer. But methinks the providence of God hath mighty opportunely provided you an answer against this objection, if it hath any place in the minds of any ; by ordering the matter so, that the duty should be recommended so unanimously at the same time by so great a body of the ministry, that in many considerable congregations in this city this subject of family-religion hath newly been insisted on at once. Is it a shame to hearken to the voice of instructors, so instructed (as we may believe) of God, as unitedly to give a kind of *celeusma*, to cry, "Come let us all at once see what can be done to beat down the growing irreligion and profaneness of the age, and to revive languishing religion and to cause it to spring up afresh in families !"

Oh what a comely, lovely example was London to the rest of the Christian world, when religion and the order of families was more generally kept up in it ! Such a lustre in this respect did hardly shine upon any spot on earth, as did upon this city. And when there is so common a cry only to revive a former practice, should it be a shame to hearken to it ?

We are indeed to take all heed imaginable, that this may not degenerate into a dead or sleepy formality. It is no necessary consequence, that it should do so. It is not the design, either of the Scripture precept, or of them that enforce such precepts upon you, that you should rest in the external form of this piece or part of religion : but that we should all labour to get the form filled up with life and spirit more and more. And by how much the more it shall be so ; as London hath been an eminent instance of religion in former times and ages, especially since the reformation, so it will be much more so. As it is grown more in other respects, so may it through the blessing of God grow in this respect also !

We are expecting the time, when the Spirit of the Lord is to be poured forth more copiously, more generally, and in a greater measure, than hitherto : and what an honour will it be, that shall be put upon London, if that shall be made a luminary to so great a part of the world besides, as such a city can fall under the notice and observation of? Instead of shame, here will be glory. Do you glory, (instead of being ashamed) to bear your part in so noble a design, to revive languishing religion in our land, and in London, and in our age. If you think it fit, that Christian religion should not dwindle and go out in a snuff; oh, contribute your utmost in your several stations, that it may be more and more a spreading and vivid thing, such as may spread and recommend itself.

SERMON VI.*



WE now proceed to the *Use*, which may be proper to be made of all the foregoing discourses. And,

I. That which hath been said may be useful for our instruction in sundry inferences, which it will be very obvious to deduce from it.

1. That if there ought to be such a thing as family-religion; then certainly there ought to be such a thing as personal. For as families do suppose persons, and are made up of them; so family-religion must suppose personal religion. For the reason formerly mentioned, I did select out of this text for my main subject the business of family-religion, and do not design a distinct discourse concerning personal; that being the business of all our preaching and hearing all the year about. But yet, as I told you, I shall not pass over upon this subject the business of solitary or personal religion. But I reckon it very fitly comes in by way of inference and deduction from what hath been said to the former: for there cannot be a greater absurdity or solecism in all the world, than that a man should pretend to set up religion in his family, and yet know nothing what belongs to any exercises of religion alone and apart by himself.

* Preached January 21, 1693.

I know many pretend, (but I hope from what you have heard it is but a pretence,) that the obligation unto family-religion is obscure and hard to be made out. But in the mean time, as to personal religion, nothing can be more express. How distinct is the command of our great and blessed Lord, in Mat. 6. 6. "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to him in secret that seeth in secret, and he will reward thee openly." Because then we have shewn, that religion is not to be shut up in a closet, is it therefore to be shut out thence, against so express a precept as this? I intend no more than only to touch upon this subject; and pursuantly unto my design in taking notice of it, it will suffice to say briefly these four things concerning it.

(1.) That there is more constant and easy opportunity for the exercise of personal and solitary religion, than there can be for any other. And a mighty privilege that is, which a good soul would be loath to forfeit or to make nothing of: "I can be with God alone at any time; I can retire myself, when I will, to the more stated exercises of personal religion. Whenever my heart is in a disposition, I can presently ejaculate a thought, a desire, and holy aspiring Godward. It is possible that men may hinder the meeting of others together for the exercises of religion; but who can come between God and me? With him I can converse in any den, in any desert, in any dungeon; and none can prevent me."

(2.) There is more liberty and freedom of spirit in the secret exercises of religion. Then I can pour out my soul and vent myself unto God freely, when I am with him in a corner. This is one of the great privileges of friendship. It is the mutual sense of those that are entirely friends to one another, "We are theatre enough to one another," as the noted moralist speaks, *Alter alteri satis amplum theatrum sumus*. I and my friend; there needs no witness, no spectator: it is enough for us, that we can be entirely and inwardly conversant with one another.

(3.) There is hereupon so much more of delight in it, the highest complacency. You know what the delights are of friendly commerce with one of a suitable spirit. But as there is no friendship like the divine, so there are no delights like those of divine friendship. When I retire myself with him on purpose, "My meditation of him shall be sweet," saith the Psalmist. psal. 104. 31. He forecasts thus with himself. "How precious are thy thoughts to me, O God! I can be with God, as soon as I can think a thought; and how delightful is it, when he is pleased to mingle thoughts with me, to inject thoughts!" That is the way of spirits conversing with one another; and

most of all of the paternal Spirit, the Father of spirits, that knoweth how most immediately and inwardly to influence his own off-spring.

(4.) There is the fullest expression of sincerity in secret and closet-religion. It is in opposition to the practice of hypocrites, that our Saviour gives that injunction which I mentioned in Mat. 6. 5. 6. "When ye pray, be not as the hypocrites, they would fain appear to men to pray; they love to pray in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." All their religion is street-religion, synagogue-religion; they know no other. "But do thou enter into thy closet, and shut the door," &c. There is nothing of design in this, but to meet with God, to pay him the homage I owe to him, and to seek from him the vital communications which I need. Here is nothing of pomp, nothing of ostentation. When our Saviour saith, hypocrites do so and so; you may easily by other places in the gospel know whom he means by that character, namely, the scribes and pharisees, mentioned in the foregoing chapter and elsewhere. They are often mentioned in conjunction with that other title, in Mat. 23. "Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites." Of all religions in the world, I would never make a pharisee the measure of my religion; to have but a pharisaical religion, a religion with others or in the sight of others, but none to myself. How many please themselves, if they think they have a more excellent gift in this kind, to make ostentation of it to others; but towards God alone they are dumb and silent! They seem to be all religion with others; but alone they are nothing in it, their hearts are all earth and stone.

2. If there ought to be family-religion set up and kept up by governors of families; then—they in families, who are under government, are obliged to comply thereunto.*—Any duty, that is incumbent upon one relative as such, doth manifestly imply the duty of the correlative or of the correlate. If governors of families must set up and keep up religion in their families; then they that are under government must comply. The same authority, that binds the one, binds the other too. So that they, who refuse to comply, are not only rebels against the governors of the family; but rebels against the Lord of heaven and earth, with whose authority such governors are invested: for there is no power but from him.

And though it be true indeed, that a human governor can see no farther than to an external conformity; he from whom the obligation principally comes, seeth farther, seeth into the

* See Page 389.

heart and soul with the strictest and most prying inspection. And therefore with reference to him, such as are under government in families are obliged to concur in heart and spirit, and not to afford an external and bodily presence only. For your business lies with the God of the spirits of all flesh; who takes notice, whether you come with an inclined heart or a disinclined, with aversion or with desire; or whether you attend upon such duties with complacency or without delight. There is no deceiving of him. The same law, that obliges you to pray, obliges you to "pray in the Holy Ghost;" and implieth, that if you desire his communications and assisting influences, as "a Spirit of grace and supplication," they will ordinarily be afforded; and that you will not be destitute of those assistances but by slighting them, by despising and resisting and vexing that Spirit, who is ready to assist you, and to engage your hearts and to do them good by such a duty.

And let me tell you, that as it is a eulogy, a character of praise and commendation, in any one to be good in a bad family; so it must proportionably be a horrid brand upon any one to be bad in a good family. It was thought fit to be put upon record concerning Abijah the son of Jeroboam, (1 Kings 14. 13.) that "there was some good thing found in him towards the Lord his God, even in the house of Jeroboam;" good desires, good inclinations, even in so wicked a family as Jeroboam's was. It is proportionably a horrid mark upon that person, who continueth ungodly in a godly family: that is, a prayerless wretch in a praying family; whose heart at least never prayeth, hath no desires after God; no contrition, no sense in the confession of sin; no love, no gratitude in the acknowledgment of mercy. For one to continue ungodly in a godly family, or to go out ungodly from a godly family, what a horrid thing will this be! How much of terror and amazement will it carry in it at least, when the case comes to open itself to view, and to be looked upon and considered in its proper and native aspect! And even as it now is; to think with one's self, "That such or such children or fellow-servants in a family, where I may have lived a considerable time, may have had their hearts melted in hearing the word read and opened and applied, but mine was always hard: they have had their souls humbled in the acknowledgment of sin, but mine was unhumiliated: they have had desires enlarged in seeking for mercy, but I had no desire after spiritual good." To live so in a good family, and to go out such from a good family; oh, the horror of this case, and the reflection it will cause in the close of time! or, if not so, in an eternity of misery, that will never end!

3. We may farther collect hence, that if family-governors

are to resolve, for their families as well as themselves, upon serving the Lord; then—they have a power and a trust over their families, and about their families, in reference hereto.—Otherwise Joshua had said he knew not what, or why, when he said, “I and my house will serve the Lord.” But this I have evinced already by several considerations; as was necessary in reference to a discourse of this nature. It is plain such a power God doth invest every governor of a family with.

4. If there be such a power lodged in family-governors; then—this power ought to have its exercise. There is no power in nature, that is frustraneous, and never to be reduced into act. Such an incongruity as that is never to be found in the whole volume of nature. And it is as little to be found in matters that are of a moral and spiritual consideration. If there be then such a power, it ought to be reduced into act. That is, masters of families, by the use and exercise of this power, must oblige those that live under their government to comport becomingly with the duties and exercises of religion in their families. There ought to be a paternal, a despotical use of this power in reference to this case.

If you ask, Wherein? we must speak with distinction, because the subordinate relatives in a family are not all of one order, but there is great diversity among them.

If where there is a godly praying husband, there is an ungodly wife, who cannot endure to comport with such exercises of religion in the family; here is indeed, in reference to what is past, matter of deep shame and humiliation, that no wiser and better a choice was made. Persons in their choice ought mutually to have reference to this as the first and main thing, to match minds and spirits, rather than fancies and fortunes. And it should be matter of deep humiliation, if it have not been so. But as to what is future, there can be no more done in this case, than to exhort with authority, and so to reprove as may be most suitable to the end, and most likely to attain it.

If it be the case as to the husband in reference to the wife, that he discovers an aversion to every thing of religion, and especially to any family-exercises of it; here is no authority to be used; (the woman hath none over the man;) but in that relation there must be all the prudent and gentle persuasions that can be, and a resolution to engage as many of the family as she can to bear a part with her in the exercises of family-religion; as you heard of Esther and her maids. For she is to obey but “in the Lord;” and not so to obey, as to abandon religion upon his account, and to throw it out of the family.

And she is kind to him herein, and puts the greatest obligation upon him, (which he may come to understand in time,) in that she labours to keep off a curse from coming upon the family : as Abigail did once keep off from Nabal a vengeance that was just coming upon him.

But as to children ; where there are godly parents that have ungodly children, discovering early a disinclination to religion ; (as indeed for the most part it is too early discoverable ;) where this is discoverable, there ought to be so much the more serious, earnest endeavour used to cultivate this wilderness of nature, and to correct it betimes. There ought to be early insinuations and endeavours to instill principles of religion, to be instrumental towards the possessing of souls with a reverence of that Majesty, whom they themselves reverence. As no doubt it was from what Jacob had long observed concerning his father Isaac, that, swearing by God, he swore by him under the name of "the fear of his father Isaac ;" (Gen. 31. 53.) him, whom he had long observed his father to have a great reverence for.

But when any are grown up with this aversion, (which it may be through great negligence was not animadverted upon betimes, as it should have been,) and do now discover open enmity against the religion of their father and of their family ; wise and holy parents have ways yet to make use of their paternal authority in that case, at least in the disposal of what is theirs. They may let it be understood and known, that by how much the less they shew themselves lovers of God, they the parents shall shew themselves so much the less lovers of them, and the more sparingly provide for them. And they ought not only to say so, but to do so. There is not a greater fault to be animadverted upon among persons professing religion, who are governors of families, than that they let a fond and foolish affection to their children prevail against that dutiful and loyal love which they owe to God ; that is, that without distinction they labour to put all that they can into the hands of an ungodly son ; which is indeed to arm him against God's interest in the world, and against religion. They should take care, that such shall live : but that they shall have all the advantages that they can give them, wherewith to maintain and keep up a war against heaven ; this is what good parents can never give an account for, that when they are only intrusted as stewards of the manifold grace of God, they should dispose of it so. These are the gifts of his grace, taken in a larger sense, of his bounty and goodness. And if they shall employ them, in order so much the more effectually to

keep up and maintain a war against the universal Ruler of the world; this is a most undutiful and disloyal affection.

As for servants; they are no such inseparable parts of a family, but that, if they be found finally inflexible, and discover an enmity against God and religion that cannot be overcome and got out of their hearts, they may be got out of the house. And they *must* be so. As the Psalmist speaks concerning telling a lye, (psalm 101.) when he had expressed in the beginning of the psalm his resolution concerning family-order, that "he would walk" or converse "in a perfect way and with an upright heart in his house," perform and do the duties of a family-governor with integrity and uprightness; (that must be meant by *walking* there;) so in what follows he tells you, what the characters should be of one that should stay or should not stay in his house. He speaks to this purpose, both negatively and positively. Negatively; The work of them that turn aside, should not cleave to him, ver. 3. That is, of them that decline and are opposite to religion; so it must principally be understood. "A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person," ver. 4. He had spoken before of the rule he would observe in reference to his house and family; and to this, those following expressions must be understood to have a direct reference. And for the expression of *froward*, and that other of *turning aside*; they are used in divers places of Scripture to signify disinclination to religion, an averse, disaffected heart towards God. As in psalm 53. 2, 3. one of these words is there used: When "God looked down from heaven, to see if any did understand and seek God;" (it is said,) "every one of them *is gone back*; they are in an averse, disaffected posture, all hanging off from God and disaffected to him." So one of these words is used in Psalm 58. 3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they *go astray*, as soon as they be born." This reference the expressions must be understood to have here, to signify disaffection to religion. Now such a one, saith he, "shall depart from me, and I will not know him." And afterwards, ver. 7. "He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight;" one, in whom this conjunction is actually found, (which is always to be expected,) disaffection to God and falsehood to one's self. A thing, that a heathen took notice of long ago; *Qui Deum non timent, fallent homines: they that fear not God, have no truth towards men.*

But the Psalmist tells us, who shall stay in his house, ver. 6. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may

dwelt with me ; And he that walketh in a perfect way, or uprightly, he shall serve me." "I will have mine eyes every where ; and if there be an honest, upright-hearted person to be found, I will choose such a one for my servant."

This ought to be a measure to all of us. A godly, faithful servant is, I am afraid, a too little valued thing with many among us : they are more indifferent, how their servants stand affected towards religion ; whether they have any love of God or godliness, yea or no. But if such can be found, saith the Psalmist, they shall serve me, live with me : I will labour to furnish my house, as far as in me is, with such as will labour to comply and fall in with me in the great business of religion. You have heard concerning this same Psalmist David, (2 Sam. 6. 20.) how, after that great solemnity was over of placing the ark, "he returned to bless his household." It is obvious enough to collect, that this was a stated practice with him, from which that great solemnity should not divert him, when the time and season was come of going to perform the ordinary exercises of religion in his house ; and unto that therefore in its proper time he applieth himself.

It will therefore be the care of good family-masters, to have such for members of their families, as may contribute to the drawing down of a blessing upon their house ; that they may not counteract themselves : And, as the daily exercise of religion is the blessing of a family, that they may not, by connivance and indulgence to wickedness and disaffection to religion, undo their work and pull down a curse, more effectually than they can hope in a half and divided way to gain or draw down a blessing.

These several ways there ought to be an exercise of the power, that God hath invested each master of a family with. And it ought to be considered, that where-ever there is a power, there is a trust. There can be no power but from God ; and where he lodgeth this power, he doth also commit a trust into such hands : And the weight of this ought to lie, and will lie upon every one that is conscientious. And therefore,

II. I shall shut up all the discourse upon this subject with a few words of exhortation.

1. Wheresoever family-religion hath been set on foot, let it be continued, and labour to improve it ; that is, to be more and more serious and lively and spiritual ; both they that are to manage the duty, and they that are to concur and join. Let there be an endeavour to grow more quick and lively herein. When I spoke about the circumstances of such exercises, I said nothing how much time was to be spent in them. Indeed there is no particular rule to be set for that ; as I have told you the

matter stands upon other accounts. In such cases prudence is to be exercised in matters of religion, as well as in other matters. "A good man will order his affairs with discretion," as hath been said again and again. Every man is to take his rule and measure for that from discretion; but by no means from indiscretion. It ought to be considered with prudence and judiciousness, what is most likely to serve the end of religion, in such exercises of it as we have been speaking of. I reckon, that one quarter of an hour spent with spirit and life, is a great deal better than hours together spent in nauseous flatting repetitions; (which was the pharisaical way,) in such a tedious and fulsome way, as tends to make religion a burden and grievance. I think that is applicable to the purposes of religion, which hath been applied to meaner, much meaner purposes; that it is good to come from a meal with an appetite; that it is good to come so too from an exercise of religion, with those pleasant lively relishes left upon one's spirit as may make him wish for the return of such a season: "When will the time for prayer and solemn attendances upon God come again?" But this, beyond all things, should be endeavoured, that there may be an improvement in life and vigour and spirituality in the performance of these things, both in them that manage them, and in those that are to concur and join; where such a thing as family-religion is set up and hath been kept up.

2. I must desire you to suffer the exhortation too, where family-religion hath not hitherto been begun. Oh, make haste and begin it, keep it off no longer. Defer no longer to God so indisputable a right; or to make use of so great an advantage for yourselves, and for yours that you are concerned for. I hinted to you in what was said to an objection, that it may be a great difficulty with some how to begin. They are ashamed to be taken notice of, as having received a conviction of this matter, and so to own a fault by applying to a contrary practice. But we all profess ourselves christians: and as we are men, we are under the government of the Supreme Ruler, and must be accountable to him. It becomes us on both accounts, to learn to be ashamed of our sin, and not to be ashamed of our duty. And if what hath been said shall obtain to be considered and laid to heart; I cannot but hope, that they who are ashamed to begin, will rather be ashamed not to begin, to defer and neglect so great and important and blessed a work as this is.

O think, how shame will be estimated one day in "the general assembly;" when all the world, the whole creation of intelligent creatures, angels and men, shall be convened be-

fore the judgment-seat. Think how shame and reputation will be estimated in the great day. You are told that the resurrection of ungodly ones will be a resurrection and awakening to shame and everlasting reproach. (Dan. 12. 2.) Many of them, that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake ; some to shame and everlasting reproach. Oh ! for a man to be hurried away from the bright, glorious presence of the blessed God, under the notion of one that would not call upon him ; severed from all “the spirits of just men made perfect ;” and from that innumerable company of glorious and blessed angels, to be made an associate and companion of devils to all eternity, for this very reason ! Why is he driven into darkness, and cast out into those regions, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth ? Why, he would never call upon God : he had a family, but there was no religion in it ; he never cared to keep up God’s interest in his earthly station. This is therefore his portion and punishment. Think, whether this will not be a greater shame, than to begin a holy religious course, that hath been neglected hitherto.

I shall briefly shut up all with the following considerations, that may through God’s blessing help to enforce all upon us.

(1.) Consider, How come you to have a family, and your family to have a place and habitation in this world ? Do you not know, that the Lord is the Ruler of all this world, and that he sets the solitary in families, and appoints to all the bounds of their habitation ? And for what ? That they might seek the Lord ; (as is signified, Act. 17. 26, 27, 28.) if so be they may feel and find him out, who is not far from any one of us, since in him we all live and move and have our being. Will you defeat the design, for which God made such a world of creatures, and hath disposed them into societies and convenient stations here upon this earth ? Was this done merely to gratify and please these creatures ? That is to suppose a creature designed by God to be its own end, and that he had resigned the prerogative of his Deity to the work of his own hands now in rebellion against him.

(2.) Do not you know, that you need a constant preserver in your several dwellings ? Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it : except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Psalm 127. 1. A city you know is made up of so many houses inhabited ; but every such house is kept in vain, if God be not the keeper. And what ! Is *he* not worth the taking notice of, that watcheth over you night after night and day after day ?

(3.) How can you expect to live comfortably in your dwell-

lings without God? What good will your enjoyments do you? Can a blessing for a soul spring out of the earth, a good suitable to an immortal mind? It is an amazing thing, as Job represents it, (chap. 21. 7.) &c. that men should outwardly flourish in their external circumstances, "live, become old, and mighty in power, have their seed established in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes, and their houses safe from fear;" they dwell securely in them, they are safe from fear, though not from danger; and yet take no notice, who it is that makes them dwell in that safety; and thereupon say unto God, notwithstanding all this, that they live under his wing and upon his bounty, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," ver. 14. "Our houses shall be as much strangers to religion, as they are to fear; they are free from fear, and they shall be as free from piety too." This they are pleased with as their greatest privilege, to be without God. And yet, as it follows ver. 16. "Their good is not in their own hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Let it be far from me! I would not have my soul bound up with such a one's soul! O my soul, enter not into the secret of those horrid creatures, those monsters of ingratitude, undutifulness and disaffection towards a kind, gracious and benign Lord! They have not their good in their own hand, but it is all in his, to whom they yet say, "Depart from us!" And they may seem to prosper in this course awhile; but see what comes of it at length ver. 17. &c. "How often is the candle of the wicked put out?" their prosperity reversed, their light extinguished? and how often cometh their destruction upon them? ver. 19. "God layeth up his iniquity for his children;" (this cometh of it at last;) he rewardeth him, and he shall know it." Many times he takes care, that he shall know it in such ways as are there expressed, ver. 20. "His own eyes shall see his own destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?" He hath children springing up, it may be, and furnished by his foolish and fond care and concern with great things in this world; such a son is married into such a family, and such a daughter into another, where they are richly and opulently provided for. But his children come to destruction in his very sight. It is often so; he seeth all wasting and melting away, even as a heap of snow before the sun. This is often the heritage of wicked men from the Lord in this world; and if it be not so in this world, worse and more dismal things ensue afterwards. In the mean time, what comfort can there be, with all the enjoyments and affluence that a man can have in

his house, be it ever so pleasing a habitation, while God is a stranger, dwells not there; is not worshipped, and so dwells not there?

(4.) Consider, how amiable a thing a religious family is, where the fear of God governeth and flourisheth. Do but read to that purpose the 128th psalm, which might fruitfully be run over.

(5.) Do not you desire, that the world should mend? that you may see better times, and to see your city flourish? If trade languish, every one is sensible: methinks we should not be insensible, if religion languish. But how shall it live, if not in families? There is the great failure. And any place, that hath been long the seat of religion, when it comes to decay in that respect, will decay in other respects too. "Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee: and I leave thee desolate without inhabitant." Jer. 6. 8. If that, which is the very soul of any people's good estate, even of the political body; if that retire, all moulders: as, if the soul of a man retires, is gone and withdrawn, the body crumbles and turns to dust. How desirable a thing is it to a native of London, to see London in a prosperous, flourishing condition! But never expect to see it so, if religion shall be in a languishing decaying condition gradually from day to day. That will be a dreadful foretoken.

(6.) Consider, that all family-masters are stewards, and all stewards must be accountable. O consider within how little a time we are every one of us to be called to an account: "What did you do in your station, as governor or governed in such a family?" Prepare, that you may be capable of rendering a good account, an account comfortable to yourselves.

(7.) Consider, that there cannot be a better omen of a good state of things coming, than if we could see that take effect, which hath been designed and endeavoured by so many servants of God at this time, upon the subject of family-religion. There could not be a more promising token to us. God hath touched the minds of those who are associated in the work of the gospel among us, all at once, by a kind of *celestusma* to cry up family-religion. If this should have its good effect, (and why should we not hope it will?) we cannot have a better token for good. The cry of wickedness is loud. If the cry of prayer, when it shall come to be so united a cry, shall prevail and be louder; this will draw down blessings. The cry of wickedness is calling for wrath and vengeance, for the vials to be poured out upon us: but if so many houses, as there are in London, wherein religion is professed, should really become so many oratories, houses of prayer; it is to be hoped there

will be so many louder cries ascending up to heaven for mercy. If there had been fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, nay ten righteous persons in Sodom; that would have prevailed for mercy upon that city. If so many as profess religion in London, would but practise it, and this part of it in particular, to set prayer on work with importunity and fervour in their several families; in this respect *vox populi* will be *vox Dei*: the voice of a praying people will be as the voice of God blessing us from above; and telling us that you have prevailed, the course of wrath is stopped, the decree reversed, prayer is heard, and that you shall see London the city of your solemnities a quiet habitation. This is said by way of answer to the people, who are brought in at the beginning of Isa. 33. 2. praying, "O Lord, be gracious unto us, let thine arm be awakened for us every morning." Here was daily prayer ascending and going up. It follows in ver. 20. "Look upon Zion the city of our solemnities, thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken." And so many prayers ascending out of so many several families in London, will be harbingers to those, from whom those prayers proceeded, and in whose souls they were formed and inwrought. Such praying souls shall ascend at length and follow their prayers. And if we who are now here assembled have not this hope, what are we here for? Why do we worship? if this be not our hope, that our souls shall follow our adoration? We know we are to be here but a little while. We send up prayers, desires and praises here in our assembly, in the hope and expectation that, before long, we shall follow the prayers and praises which ascend out of our assembly. Worship God with the same hope and expectation in your families, that you yourselves shall before long follow your prayers and praises ascending from thence also.