

A PLEASING

Instruction and Doctrine

HOW ALL PIOUS PARENTS, ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES,

ARE REQUIRED TO

GOVERN, CORRECT AND EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN,

IN A

PIOUS, VIRTUOUS AND GODLY LIFE.

BY

MENNO SIMON.

“Withhold not correction from thy child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell,” Prov. 23: 13, 14.

“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest.” “The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother shame,” Prov. 29: 17, 15.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” 1 Cor. 3: 11.

ELKHART, INDIANA:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN F. FUNK AND BROTHER.

1871.

"Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their necks from their youth. Hast thou daughters? Have a care of their body, and show not thyself cheerful towards them," Eccl. 7: 23, 24.

"He that maketh too much of his son shall bind up his wounds. Cocker thy son, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he will bring thee to heaviness. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow with him, and lest thou gnash thy teeth in the end. Give him no liberty in his youth, and wink not at his follies. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat him on the sides while he is a child, lest he wax stubborn, and be disobedient unto thee, and so bring sorrow to thine heart," Eccl. 30: 7—12.

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying," Prov. 19: 18.

P R E F A C E.

TO THE ELDERS in all churches, and chosen of God in Christ Jesus; my beloved brethren in the Lord, unto you be grace, peace and mercy from God, our father, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Savior; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. To whom be praise forever and ever, Amen.

My dearly beloved brethren in the Lord, we thank the Lord always for you in all our prayers, and pray without ceasing, unto our kind Father, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, that he would strengthen you with the gift of his Holy Spirit, that you may be filled with all knowledge, wisdom, discretion and power, necessary rightly to oversee the church of Christ, and to dispense the word of God to sincere, pious souls, according to your gift and calling, and that you may walk worthy of the vocation whereto you are called and chosen of God and his holy church, as shepherds and teachers, to the end that the saints may be kept firmly united by the common service, to the edification of the body of Christ. Take diligent care of your charge, and display a sincere concern for your flock, at all times earnestly exhort them to love, to good works, like Paul; to the pure fear and love of the Lord; to a godly, unblamable conversation, in all humility, righteousness, love, peace, harmony, mercy, and obedience to the whole word of God. Caution them against all false doctrine, and against the sword of evil tongues; for if a man bridle not his tongue, nor restrain it, his worship is vain and unprofitable. Also, that they take heed in their whole walk and conversation; circumscribe their hearts; season their words, and perform all their actions in the fear of the

Lord; that they may procure a good name for the gospel of Christ and his holy church; comply with his word and will, and thus attain unto salvation. Beware of all innovations and strange doctrines not contained in the word of Christ and his apostles, nor conformable thereunto. Show forth, at all times, Christ and his word. If any man introduce a doctrine differing from that taught by Christ and his word, let him be excommunicated. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He is the precious corner-stone in Zion, which shall abide forever. Hear, believe, trust, follow, hope and abide in him; press diligently after him, conforming yourselves unto his Spirit, word and life, and you shall neither deceive nor be deceived. My dearly beloved brethren in the Lord, I beseech and admonish you, neglect not the ministration of your brotherly love, but attend faithfully thereto. Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. Again, all the elders I, who am also an elder, exhort with Peter, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly." You who teach obedience, be yourselves obedient to the church of Christ, in all things which are good and expedient; as examples for the flock. As Paul directed Titus, saying, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." Also, "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." Do all in the fear of the Lord faith-

fully, and with obedient and perfect hearts, for you are made keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein. Study, therefore, to show yourselves approved of God, workmen, obedient, blameless, that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. My wish and desire therefore is, that you be earnest in this, so that they who believe in God, may be made zealous to excel in good works, which is good and profitable unto all men; instruct, reprove, rebuke, exhort and console, as occasion may require; and forsake not the fraternal assembling of yourselves together, the meeting and ordinance of the Lord. Strengthen one another

kindly with the word of the Lord, that you may increase in faith, love and righteousness, and come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

With this, dear brethren, I will commit you to Almighty God, with the earnest desire that you propound unto all the brethren this brief admonition, concerning the education of children, in order that every one may observe and comply with the same in the full sense, in the bringing up, teaching and instruction of his children. The Lord Jesus Christ be with my beloved, yea, dearly beloved brethren throughout eternity, Amen.



THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

UNTO ALL ELDERS and joint-heirs in the faith of Christ, grace be unto you and peace from God, our heavenly Father, through his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, by the power and co-operation of his Holy Spirit, to his everlasting praise and glory, and to our edification and salvation, Amen.

You are aware, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, that we all, without exception, inherit from Adam an ill-disposed, evil and sinful flesh; nay, that all our desires from our youth are evil continually, as Moses writes; also, that we find nothing in ourselves, as the treasure of our first birth, but perfect blindness, unrighteousness, sin and death. If now the power of this innate disposition is to be diminished, suppressed and destroyed, it must be accomplished by the pure fear of the Lord, which proceeds from a true faith through the word of the Lord, and from a clear perception of the righteous judgment and terrible wrath of God, which will burn forever against all impenitent sinners. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; it drives out sin and makes upright, pious children, as we learn from Jesus Sirach, Eccl. 12; Prov. 9.

Since, then, the merciful Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the great, Almighty Lord, has encompassed us with the light of his grace, and through faith in Jesus Christ, has awakened us from iniquity and ungodliness to a life of righteousness; therefore, let us diligently follow the glorious example of the true love of Matthew, the publican, who was not satisfied with enjoying the heavenly calling and grace himself, but went and invited other publicans and sinners, that they might also be saved and obtain the like spirit, grace and mercy from the

Lord, for such is the nature and disposition of Christ, Matt. 9.

Trade, therefore, among yourselves with the talent given you from on high, and sincerely compassionate your unbelieving, blind parents, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, servants and neighbors; do not conceal from them the gift, grace, word and will of God; for their feet are in the way of death; perhaps they may, at some time or other, extricate themselves from the snares of unrighteousness in which they are bound and entangled, and turn themselves to the Lord with all their hearts. My dear brethren, understand this as regards men of sense and discretion. Brethren in Christ, if we should see any such in danger of being drowned or burned, or in any danger that threatened their lives, and there was a prospect that we could render them assistance, would not our inmost souls be moved with compassion towards them, if haply we might afford them relief? Undoubtedly. And now we see with our own eyes, if we but believe the Lord's word, that they are walking in the shadow of eternal death, are already committed to the grave of hell, and liable to be devoured forever by the eternal, unquenchable fire, unless from their hearts they turn unto Christ and his word, repent, and become regenerated, as the Scriptures teach. Therefore, consider seriously the heartrending misery and wretchedness of their poor souls which must live forever, either in heaven or in hell, and strive diligently and faithfully whether they may not yet, in some way, by your faithful ministry of pure love, and by the direction and instruction of the divine word, be rescued and delivered from everlasting destruction, and be made partakers of eternal salvation. For genuine charity

is of such a nature that it is constantly hungering and thirsting after the glory of God and the salvation of all men, even of those who are strangers to us according to the flesh.

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, forasmuch as we are now constrained, by saving charity, with benevolence and sympathy, and know through the unction of the Spirit and word of God, that the nature of man is completely corrupted in Adam, and is opposed from youth, to the word of the Lord, as aforesaid; therefore, let us be particularly vigilant and solicitous with regard to our own children, displaying unto them a greater degree of spiritual love than towards others; for they are the natural offspring of our flesh and blood, a serious and precious charge committed by God to our especial care. Be, therefore, particularly mindful, that you instruct them from their youth in the way of the Lord, that they fear and love God, walk in all modesty and submission; that they be genteel, well-disposed, discreet, honor and obey their father and mother, using reasonable language, not lying, nor clamorous, not stubborn, nor self-willed; for such is not becoming the children of the saints, Deut. 6; Eph. 6. The world desire for their children that which is earthly and perishable, such as money, honor, fame and wealth. From infancy they train them up to vice, pride, haughtiness and idolatry. But with you, who are born of God, this is not the case; for it behooves you to seek something else for your children; namely, that which is heavenly and eternal, and hence it is your duty to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as Paul teaches, Eph. 6: 1—4. Moses commanded Israel to teach their children the law and commandments of the Lord, to talk of them when they sat down in their houses, and when they walked by the way, and when they lay down, and when they rose up. Now, since we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that we should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, Deut. 6: 7; 1 Pet. 2: 9; therefore it behooves us to show ourselves patterns and examples in all righteousness and blamelessness, and to ap-

pear unto the whole world as we are thereunto called: for if we do not keep a strict eye upon our own children, but permit them to follow their evil inclination, corrupt nature and disposition, not correcting and chastising them according to the word of the Lord, we may with the greatest propriety lay our hands upon our mouths, and remain silent. For why should we teach those not of our household, when we take no pains to preserve our own families in the love and fear of God? Paul says, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. 5: 8.

My dearly beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, take heed that you do not ruin your children and train them in vice, through carnal love, and thus give offence; lest in the day of judgment, their souls be required at your hands, and it happen unto you, on account of your children, as it did unto Eli, the high priest, who was chastened by the hand of the Almighty, on account of his sons, 1 Sam. 3: 11—18: but diligently imitate the testimony declared by the angel of the Lord respecting pious Abraham, "I know him," says he, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment," Gen. 18: 19. This is the chief and most important care of the godly, that their children may fear God, do good, and be saved: even as the God-fearing Tobias admonished his son's children, saying, My son hearken unto thy father; serve the Lord in truth, and cleave unto him in equity; be mindful of him, and let not thy will be set to sin or to transgress his commandments; teach this to thy children that they give alms, fear God all their days, and trust in him with their whole hearts.

My beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, who sincerely love the word of the Lord, thus instruct your children from youth up, and daily admonish them with the word of the Lord, setting a good example. Teach and admonish them, I say, in proportion to the development of their understanding: constrain and correct them with discretion and moderation, without anger or bitterness, Col. 3; lest they be discouraged; spare not the rod, if reason and necessity require

it, and reflect upon what is written. He that loveth his son causeth him oft to feel the rod that he may have joy of him in the end. He that chastiseth his son shall have joy in him. "He that maketh too much of his son shall bind up his wounds; and his bowels will be troubled at every cry." A horse unbroken becometh headstrong: and a child left to himself will be wilful. "Give him no liberty in his youth, and wink not at his follies," Eccl. 30: 7, 11. Bow down his neck while he is young, lest he wax stubborn, and be disobedient to thee, and so bring sorrow to thine heart. Correct thy son, and keep him from idleness, lest thou be made ashamed on his account, Prov. 29.

Dearly beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord, if all parents, who glory in the name of the Lord, would deeply impress the words of Sirach upon their hearts, and inscribe them on the tablet of their souls, O how virtuous, pious and devout would many children be raised, who now, alas! run wild and unrestrained, honoring neither their parents, nor the church and gospel of Christ. "An evil-nurtured son," says Sirach, "is the dishonor of his father;" again, says he, "Though they multiply, rejoice not in them, except the fear of God be with them; for one that is just, is better than a thousand; and better it is to die without children, than to have them that are ungodly," Sir. 22: 3; 16: 2, 3.

Beloved brethren, consider these words well, and revolve them in your minds. Necessity impels me to write; for some, alas! live such lives with their children, that one is constrained to write and reprove. I write and admonish you again: Take heed, lest the blood and condemnation of your children come upon you. If you love your children with a godly love, teach, admonish and instruct them in God, lest the word, blood and death of the Lord be made unto them of no effect, and his name and church be blasphemed by the unwise, through them.

Beloved brethren in Christ, if you rightly know God and his word, and believe that the end of the righteous is everlasting life, and the end of the wicked eternal death, endeavor to the utmost of your power, to conduct your children in the way of life, and divert them from the way of death, as far as in you lies. Pray to Almighty God for

the gift of his grace, that in his great mercy, he may guide and preserve them in the right path, through the directing influence of his Holy Spirit. Watch over their salvation as for your own souls. Teach, instruct, admonish, threaten, correct and chastise them, as circumstances require. Keep them away from naughty, wicked children, among whom they hear and learn nothing but lying, cursing, swearing, fighting and knavery. Have them instructed in reading and writing, bring them up to habits of industry, and let them learn such trades as are suitable, expedient and adapted to their age and constitution. If you do this, you shall live to see much honor and joy of your children. But if you do it not, heaviness of heart shall consume you at last. For a child left to himself, without reproof, is not only the shame of his father, but he bringeth his mother to shame, Prov. 29.

This brief admonition I have written to my beloved, from motives of sincere love, and not without a reason; for in the course of my ministry, I have too frequently observed, how disorderly, improperly, nay, heathenlike, many persons conduct themselves towards their children. The absurd, senseless love of the flesh, has such an influence over some, and they are so blinded by the natural affection for their children, that they can neither perceive nor observe any evil, error or defect in them, notwithstanding they frequently abound in idle tricks and wantonness, are disobedient to father and mother, murmur at them, collect and carry abroad lies, quarrel and fight with other children, and mock people as they pass by, crying and calling after them.

Brethren in Christ, to connive, by reason of a blind, carnal love, at these and similar disgraceful tricks of children, is a love not to be applauded, but much rather to be shunned and avoided; for it is earthly, sensual, devilish. And forasmuch, as we ought to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the holy nation, the chosen generation, yea, the bride of Christ, it by no means becomes us, to have, or to bear such sensual love or preposterous affection, in any circumstances, towards our children; but it is our duty, as far as in us lies, diligently and earnestly to instruct and govern

our children and household, as well as ourselves, in conformity to the sincerity of godliness, a life of virtue, and the word of God.

With this, I will have delivered and preserved my soul in the presence of the Lord and his church, and I do desire, for the Lord's sake, that this epistle may be taken in good part, and read by the elders, in the hearing of all the brethren, to the end that the innocent may take heed, and be circumspect, and those who are guilty of these mis-steps, errors and failings, may reform, and that without considering me as being officious, in regulating the concerns of their household. Ah no! in the presence of God, I desire nothing in this, but that in all things, you conform yourselves to the Scriptures, and to christian gravity, and that all the concerns of the Lord's church, may be

conducted according to the divine will and ordinance. The Searcher of hearts and reins knows that I lie not. I would, therefore, that you also accept and receive it in love: for in sincerity have I written it.

And now, beloved brethren and sisters, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved without spot, and blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he who called you. May the merciful Father, through his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, strengthen you all with the precious gift of his Holy Spirit, Amen.

