

A Help to Domestic Happiness

John Angell James



Soli Deo Gloria Publications
. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .

Soli Deo Gloria Publications

An imprint of Reformation Heritage Books

2965 Leonard St. NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0889

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

Paperback reprint 2020

ISBN 978-1-60178-788-0

This reprint of *A Help to Domestic Happiness* was first published in 1883 in London as *The Family Monitor, or A Help to Domestic Happiness* by Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis.

For additional Reformed literature, request a free book list from Reformation Heritage Books at the above regular or email address.

PREFACE.

THE substance of the ensuing chapters was delivered by the Author in a course of sermons which followed a series of expository lectures on the Epistle to the Ephesians. The consecutive method of preaching, which he principally uses, is attended, he thinks, with this, among many other advantages, that it brings under the review of a minister, many subjects which would otherwise be overlooked ; affords an opportunity for the introduction of some topics, which, from their peculiarity, seem to require such a way of access to the pulpit ; and also furnishes an apology for the discussion of others, which the fastidiousness of modern delicacy has almost excluded from the range of pastoral admonition. On entering upon the first branch of relative duties, the Author was so much under the

influence, perhaps improperly, of this excess of refinement, and felt so much the difficulty of making a public statement of the duties of husbands and wives, that he had determined, at one time, to relieve himself from the embarrassment, by merely reading large extracts from Mr. Jay's beautiful sermon on this subject. After he had preached two discourses, and thus discharged, as well as he was able, this rather perplexing task, he received a numerously signed petition from many husbands and their wives, belonging to his congregation, requesting that they might be permitted to *read* in print the statement of their mutual obligations, which they had heard delivered with so much fidelity and impartiality from the pulpit. Instead of being limited by this request, the Author has gone beyond it, and sent forth the whole series of relative duties ; thus furnishing a manual of advice, in which all the members of the household may find something appropriate to the peculiarity of their circumstances.

It is an unquestionable truth, that if a man be not happy at home, he cannot be happy any where ; and the converse of the proposition is no less true, that he

who *is* happy there, need be miserable no where. “It is the place of all the world I love most,” said the interesting Author of the Task, when speaking of home. And *he* may be felicitated who can say the same. Any attempt, however feeble, to render the domestic circle, what it ever should be, a scene of comfort, is at least benevolent. Nor is this a hopeless effort ; for he who has the bible in his hand, and speaks as the oracles of God, can disclose at once, and in few words, the important secret. The principles of greatest consequence to mankind, whether we refer to science or to morals, lie not buried deep in gloom and mystery, but are to be found, like the manna of the Israelites, upon the surface of things. The secret of happiness lies folded up in the leaves of the bible, and is carried in the bosom of religion. The Author knows of no other way to felicity, and therefore does not profess to teach any other. Let the two parties in wedded life be believers in Christ Jesus, and partake themselves of the peace that passeth understanding ; let them, when they become a father and a mother, bring up their children in the fear of God ; and as a master and a

mistress, be diligent and successful in instructing their servants in the principles of religion, and if happiness is to be found upon earth, it will be enjoyed within the hallowed circle of a family, thus united by love, and sanctified by grace.

The Author does not deny, that much of worldly comfort may be, and often is, enjoyed in some families, which neither possess nor profess a serious regard to the claims of religion ; while it must be acknowledged on the other hand, that there are to be found professors of religion, whose households are any thing but happy ones. In reference to the former, it may be affirmed, that piety, while it would raise their enjoyment to a sublimer kind, and a higher degree of happiness in this world, would also perpetuate it through eternity ; and in reference to the latter, it may be remarked, that their disquietude is not produced by religion, but occasioned by the want of it. A mere profession of the christian faith, is rather a hindrance to felicity than a help : nothing short of real religion can be expected to yield its joys.

In the following pages, there will be found nume-

rous and long extracts from an incomparably excellent work, by the Rev. Christopher Anderson, of Edinburgh, entitled, “The Domestic Constitution.” Of that volume, the Author feels that his own is not worthy, in any instance, to be the harbinger; but should he find that he has introduced any families to an acquaintance with a treatise, so well worthy of their most serious attention, he will be thankful for that measure of benefit, and rejoice that he has not laboured in vain.

Edgbaston, September 13, 1828.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
CHAPTER I.	
THE DOMESTIC CONSTITUTION	i
CHAPTER II.	
THE MUTUAL DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.....	11
CHAPTER III.	
THE SPECIAL DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.....	38
CHAPTER IV.	
SOME REMARKS ON THE FORMATION OF THE MARRIAGE UNION	82
CHAPTER V.	
THE DUTIES OF PARENTS.....	106
CHAPTER VI.	
THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS	171
CHAPTER VII.	
ON THE FRATERNAL DUTIES	208
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE DUTIES OF MASTERS	233
CHAPTER IX.	
THE DUTIES OF SERVANTS	271

CHAPTER I.

THE DOMESTIC CONSTITUTION.

“By Thee
Founded in reason, loyal, just and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of Father, Son, and Brother, first were known.
Far be it that I should write thee, sin or blame,
Or think thee unbefitting holiest place,
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets !”

MILTON.

A FAMILY ! How delightful the associations we form with such a word ! How pleasing the images with which it crowds the mind, and how tender the emotions which it awakens in the heart ! Who can wonder that domestic happiness should be a theme dear to poetry, and that it should have called forth some of the sweetest strains of fancy and of feeling ? Or who can be surprised, that of all the objects which present themselves in the vista of futurity to the eye of those who are setting out on the journey of life, this should excite the most ardent desires, and engage the most active pursuits ? But alas ! of those who in the ardour of youth start for the possession of this dear prize, how many fail ? And why ? *Because their imagination alone is engaged on the subject : they*

have no definite ideas of what it means, nor of the way in which it is to be obtained. It is a mere lovely creation of a romantic mind, and oftentimes, with such persons, fades away,

“And like the baseless fabric of a vision,
“Leaves not a rack behind.”

It may be of service, therefore, to lay open the sources of domestic happiness, and to shew that these are to be found, not in the flowery regions of imagination, but in the sober realities of piety, chaste love, prudence, and well formed connexions. These precious springs are within the reach of all who will take the right path that leads to them : and this is the way of knowledge. We must make ourselves acquainted with the nature, designs, and importance of the family compact: we must analyse this union to ascertain its elements, its laws, and its purposes. Who can be a good member of any state, without knowing the nature of its constitution, and the laws by which it is directed? And it is equally vain to look for domestic happiness, without a clear insight into the ends and laws which Providence has laid down for the formation of the household.

In the discussion which have been agitated to settle the question as to the form of civil government best adapted to secure the welfare of the human race, the FAMILY CONSTITUTION has been too much overlooked. Speculation has been indulged, and theories proposed by their respective authors, in reference to the greater aggregations of society, with all the confidence of ora-

cular authority; while at the same time, it is evident they have forgotten how much the well being of states is dependent on the well being of the families of which all states are composed. If there be any truth in the figure, by which a nation is compared to a pillar, we should recollect, that while individuals are the materials of which it is formed, it is the good condition of families that constitutes the cement which holds it together, and gives to it its fine form, solidity and durability. Let this be wanting, and however inherently excellent the materials, however elegant the shape, however ornamented the base, the shaft, or the capital may be, it contains in itself the principle of decay, an active cause of delapidation and ruin.

The domestic constitution is a divine institute. God formed it himself. "He taketh the solitary and setteth him in families; and like all the rest of his works, it is well and wisely done. It is, as a system of government, quite unique: neither below the heavens, nor above them, is there any thing precisely like it. In some respects it resembles the civil government of a state; in others, the ecclesiastical rule of a church; and it is there that the church and the state may be said to meet. "This meeting, however, is only on a very small scale, and under very peculiar circumstances." When directed as it should be, every family has a sacred character, inasmuch as the head of it acts the part of both the prophet and the priest of the household, by instructing them in the knowledge, and leading them in the worship of God; while at the same time, he

discharges the duties of a king, by supporting a system of order, subordination and discipline. Conformably with its nature is its design : beyond the benefit of the individuals which compose it, and which is its first and immediate object, it is intended to promote the welfare of the national community to which it belongs, and of which it is a part : hence every nation has stamped a great value on the family compact, and guarded it with the most powerful sanctions. Well instructed, well ordered, and well governed families, are the springs, which, from their retirements, send forth the tributary streams that make up, by their confluence, the majestic flow of national greatness and prosperity : nor can any state be prosperous, where family order and subordination are generally neglected ; nor otherwise *than* prosperous, whatever be its political forms, where these are generally maintained. It is certainly under the wise instruction, and the impartial sceptre of a father, and within the little family circle, that the son becomes a good citizen ; it is by the fire side and upon the family hearth, that loyalty, and patriotism, and every public virtue grows ; as it is in disordered families, that factious demagogues, and turbulent rebels, and tyrannical oppressors, are trained up to be their neighbour's torment, or their country's scourge. It is there that the thorn and the brier, to use the elegant simile of the prophet, or the myrtle and the fir tree are reared, which are in future time to be the ornament and defence, or the deformity and misery of the land.

But, has the domestic constitution a reference only to the present world and its perishable interests ? By no means. All God's arrangements for man, view him, and are chiefly intended for him, in his relation to eternity. The eye of Deity is upon that immortality to which he has destined the human race. Every family has in fact a sacred character belonging to it, which may indeed be forgotten or disdained ; but the family is constituted, and ought, therefore, to be conducted with the prospect of the rising generation following that which precedes it, not only to the grave but to eternity.* Every member of every household is an immortal creature ; every one that leaves the circle by death, goes into an eternity of torment or of bliss. Now since all the institutes of God look to another world as their chief and ultimate reference, surely, surely, that institute which is the most powerful of all in the formation of character, must be considered as set up with a special intention to prepare the subjects of it for "glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life."

No one judges aright of this household compact, nor can any be in a capacity rightly to perform its duties, who does not consider this double relation which it bears to the state and to the church, and who does not view it as a preparatory system, for training up the good citizen and the real christian. And for these objects, how great is the power which it really

* Anderson.

possesses : how considerable is the mutual influence of husbands and wives in moulding each others tastes, or modifying each others dispositions ; of parents, in forming the character of their children and servants ; and of brothers and sisters, in stimulating and guiding each others pursuits. The power of other constitutions is remote, occasional and feeble ; but this is close, constant and mighty. With other systems the character is only casually brought into contact ; but this always touches us. We live, and move, and have our being in the very centre of it. So powerful is the influence of this association on its members, that it has preserved them, by the blessing of God, in the possession of piety and morality, in times and places of the greatest corruption of manners. On what vantage ground does the conscientious christian parent here stand ! The springs of public and social life may be greatly corrupted ; the nation in which he dwells may degenerate into licentiousness, into idolatry, or into the most daring infidelity. Retiring then to this sacred enclosure, he may entrench himself, and there, lifting up a standard for God, either wait the approach of better days, or leave a few behind him, on whom the best blessings of those days will certainly descend. Though the heavens be shut up and there be no dew, the little enclosure which he cultivates, like the fleece of Gideon, will discover evident marks of the Divine favour. It actually seems as though in the wide scene, where the vices of the age may and can reign tri-

umphant, this were some secure and sacred retreat, into which they cannot, dare not enter.”*

It must be evident, however, that the great ends of the domestic economy, cannot be kept in view, nor the moral power of it displayed, unless the heads of it rightly understand their duty, and have a disposition properly to perform it. They must be christians in reality, or no christian government can be maintained. Where religion is wanting as the basis of their union, these happy fruits of it cannot be expected. The inferior and secondary object may be accomplished in the absence of parental piety, though neither so certainly, nor so effectually; but as to the more sublime and permanent end of the family constitution, which connects its members with the church of God on earth, and with the company of the redeemed in heaven, this cannot be looked for, where the father and the mother are destitute of true religion. Oh, how many interesting households are to be found, where all the mere social virtues are cultivated with assiduity, where the domestic charities all flourish, and public excellence is cherished, but which, on account of the want of vital godliness, are still losing the highest end of their union, are carrying on no preparatory course

* Mr. Anderson, in support and illustration of this beautiful sentiment, brings forward the families of the Kenites, and the Rechabites, whose history he traces, and shews it to be like a pure and vigorous stream, urging its course through a turbid lake, with the waters of which it refuses to blend, and maintaining its own characteristic, amidst surrounding impurity.

of education for the skies, and are destined to be swept away with the wreck of the nations that know not God, and with the wicked who shall be turned into hell. Alas, alas ! that from such sweet scenes, such lovely retreats of connubial love and domestic peace, to which learning, science, wealth, elegance, have been admitted, religion should be excluded ; and that while many wise and interesting guests are continually welcomed to the house, *He* only should be refused, who blessed the little family of Bethany ; and who, wherever he goes, carries salvation in his train, and gives immortality to the joys which would otherwise perish for ever.

Precious, indeed, are the joys of a happy family ; but, oh, how fleet ! How soon, *must* the circle be broken up, how suddenly *may* it be ! What scenes of delight, resembling gay visions of fairy bliss, have all been unexpectedly wrapt in shadow and gloom, by misfortune, by sickness, by death. The last enemy has entered the paradise, and by expelling one of its tenants, has embittered the scene to the rest ; the ravages of death have been in some cases followed by the desolations of poverty, and they who once dwelt together in the happy enclosure, have been separated and scattered to meet no more. But religion, true religion, if it be possessed, will gather them together again, after this destruction of their earthly ties, and conduct them to another paradise, into which no calamity shall enter, and from which, no joy shall ever depart.

Happy then would it be, for all who stand related by these household ties, if the bonds of nature were hallowed and rendered permanent by those of divine grace. To found our union on any basis which does not contain religion in its formation, is to erect it on a quicksand, and to expose it to the fury of a thousand billows, each of which may overturn the fabric of our comfort in a moment : but to rest it upon religion, is to found it upon a rock, where we shall individually still find a refuge, when the nearest and the dearest relations are swept away by the tide of dissolution.

It is a pleasing reflection, that the domestic constitution depends not for its existence, its laws, its right administration, or its rich advantages, either upon family possessions, or the forms of national policy. It may live and flourish in all its tender charities, and all its sweet felicities, and all its moral power, in the cottage as well as in the mansion ; under the shadow of liberty, and even under the scorching heat of tyranny. Like the church of which it is in some respects the emblem, it accommodates itself to every changing form of surrounding society, to every nation, and to every age. Forming with the church the only two institutions ever set up by God, as to their framework ; like its kindred institute, it remains amidst the ruins of the fall, the lapse of ages, and the changes of human affairs, the monument of what has been, the standing prediction of what shall be. Tyrants that crush the liberties of a state, cannot destroy the constitution of the family : and even persecutors that

silence the preacher, and scatter the congregation, cannot hush the voice of parental instruction, or extinguish parental influence. Religion, hunted and driven by human power from the place of public concourse, would still find a retreat, as it often has done under such circumstances, in the household of faith ; and *there* would keep alive, upon the family altar, that holy fire with which the sacrifices of the temple, under happier auspices, shall be offered. Neither families, nor the church of the redeemed, shall ever be entirely lost, whatever changes the world may yet have to pass through ; “but blessing and being blest, will of themselves alone one day introduce the millenium.”*

To all, therefore, who are united in the bonds of this relationship, I offer the consideration of these pages ; which prescribe duties, and present advantages, belonging alike to all. Domestic happiness, in many respects, resembles the manna which was granted to the Israelites, in the wilderness ; like that precious food, it is the gift of God which cometh down from heaven : it is not to be purchased with money ; it is dispensed alike to the rich and to the poor, and accommodates itself to every taste ; it is given with an abundance that meets the wants of all who desire it : to be obtained, it must be religiously sought in God’s own way of bestowing it ; and is granted to man as a refreshment during his pilgrimage, through this wilderness, to the celestial Canaan.

* See Anderson and Dwight.