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ART. I.—*Melancthon's Letters*.*

WHOEVER feels an interest in the Reformation, feels an interest in Melancthon; and yet, to judge others by ourselves, he is comparatively little known. The noble edition of Luther's correspondence, published by De Wette, which is, in fact, the best biography of Luther, made us wish for something of the same kind, to bring us personally acquainted with *Magister Philippus*. We supposed, however, that the epistolary remains of Melancthon would probably not prove so illustrative of his history and character, as those of his more ardent and open-hearted colleague. We even doubted whether there existed a sufficient mass of his letters, to form a collection of tolerable size. We are, therefore, both surprised and pleased to see three goodly quartos, filled with the miscellaneous papers, chiefly letters, of Melancthon. While we gratify our own curiosity respecting them, we propose to take our readers with us, for the purpose of affording them a glimpse at Master Philip, through the faithful glass of his own private correspondence. Before doing this,

* *Corpus Reformatorum* ed. C. G. Bretschneider. (Philippi Melanthonis Opera quae supersunt omnia.) Vol. I.—III.—(Epistolae, Praefationes, Consilia, Judicia, Schedae Academicae.) 4to.

Our limits warn us to conclude these extracts. Though made in the most desultory manner, and in a very hasty and imperfect version, they will not, we trust, be wholly without interest for many of our readers. And yet two quarto volumes and a half remain untouched. From this the reader may infer, how large a measure of instruction and amusement might be derived from an attentive reading of the entire work. It is certainly an invaluable addition to our means of information, with respect to a most interesting period of history. It is especially important, from the new light which it throws upon the personal relations and peculiarities of the great characters in this great drama. To those, however, who may be disposed to draw conclusions, with respect to Melancthon, from the quotations in the present article, we would urge the propriety of recollecting that they all belong to the first twenty-three years of his life. If in the beginning of our strictures, we were struck with the deficiencies apparent in Melancthon's early letters, we are no less struck with the rapidity and vigour of his moral growth during the few years over which we have been passing. We are confirmed in our persuasion, that the reformation times not only tried men's souls, but disciplined their minds, matured their characters, and, in some signal cases, made them genuine heroes. We recommend the volumes now before us to some of our book makers, as affording matter for at least a stout octavo; and the whole series, of which they are a part, to our public libraries and private book-collectors.

ART. II.—*The importance of peculiar attention on the part of Ministers of the Gospel to the Children of their charge.*

It is a remark which has long had all the familiarity and weight of a proverbial maxim, that children are the hope of the church and of the state. If this be so, it is of the utmost importance, in every point of view, that the friends, and especially that the ministers of religion, should direct early and pointed attention to their moral and religious, as well as to their intellectual training. The arguments in favour of the

early and diligent instruction of the young in every kind of laudable knowledge, and especially in the most precious of all knowledge, are so many and powerful, that the only difficulty is, where to begin and where to end the enumeration.

When useful knowledge of any kind, and especially religious knowledge, is early lodged in the mind of a child, it is most likely to be permanently fixed there, and to be productive of rich ultimate fruit. This scripture, reason, and experience all attest. Hence we see so many examples of persons faithfully instructed in religious truth from their mother's lap, even though years of carelessness and sin succeeded that instruction—being afterwards brought to reflection and unfeigned piety—by the seed, long before sown, and, to all appearance, irrecoverably buried, springing up, and bringing forth a rich harvest. The writer of these pages has had many opportunities of observing the deplorable, and almost invincible ignorance of those who passed their early youth without any instruction in divine things. It seemed difficult to measure or conceive the impenetrable darkness which covered their minds, and appeared to defy all efforts to impart instruction to them. It became almost necessary for them to learn a new language before the instructor, in such cases, could be understood. Whereas one whose mind had been early and fully brought in contact with the bible, with catechisms, and other formularies of truth, manifested a readiness and a capacity to receive instruction altogether peculiar and striking.

While this consideration ought to encourage and stimulate *parents*, both to begin early, and to take the utmost pains, to imbue the minds of their children with divine knowledge; it ought also to impel *ministers* of the gospel to direct peculiar and unceasing attention to the children and youth of their charge. There is no part of their charge so likely to be benefited by faithful attentions to their spiritual interest as the young; and no part so likely to make that rich return for this fidelity, which cannot fail of being peculiarly gratifying to the heart of a pious and devoted pastor. The present writer by long, varied and painful experience, knows something of the difficulties which attend a faithful discharge of the duty here recommended; but he can deliberately declare, that, if these difficulties were tenfold greater than they are, the advantages resulting from their constant and adequate discharge, are, in his opinion, so many, so important, and so incalculably precious, that he could not hesitate to consider

these advantages as an hundred-fold more than a counter-balance for all the labour undergone for their attainment.

Does a pastor desire to *render his own ministry as profitable as possible to the young people of his charge*? He cannot take a course more directly adapted to attain this object than to attend to them; to become acquainted with them; to meet them frequently in private, and as a body; to catechize them; and to render them familiar with his person, and his modes of thinking and speaking; and to imbue their minds with those elementary principles of divine knowledge which will prepare them to hear him in the pulpit with intelligence, with respect, and with profit. If a preacher wished for the most favourable opportunity conceivable for preparing the youth of his charge to listen to his sermons to the greatest degree of advantage, it would not be easy to devise one more admirably suited to his purpose than to meet them, by themselves, once a week, in a paternal and affectionate manner; to teach them the elementary principles of that system which his ministry in the pulpit is intended to inculcate; thus to accustom them to his topics, his phraseology, his manner, his whole course of instruction, and prepare them to receive the richest benefit from his sermons. There can be no doubt that one great reason why so many young people receive so little profit from the regular discourses of their minister, is, that he has taken so little previous pains to gain their attention by previous instruction; to prepossess them in favour of the substance and mode of his teaching; to fill their tender, susceptible minds with those simple views of gospel truth which he carries out, and impresses in his more studied discourses from the sacred desk. That minister who desires that his preaching may make the deepest and most favourable impression on the minds of the children of his charge, is an infatuated man, regardless of all the dictates of reason, experience, and the word of God, who does not employ himself diligently, in all practicable ways, in paving the way for their reception of his more mature and public instruction. Young people *thus* prepared to attend on his preaching, will, of course, understand it better, receive it more readily and respectfully, and be likely, by the grace of God, to lay it up in their hearts and practise it in their lives.

Does a pastor desire to *bind the young people of his charge to the church of their fathers; to prevent their wandering heedlessly and ignorantly to other denomina-*

tions? He cannot take a more direct or effectual course, than to imbue their minds early and deeply with the system of truth; to put them on their guard against error; and to prepossess them in favour of those doctrines which he deems scriptural and true. Let any one observe the history of particular churches, and it will invariably be found, that where the pastoral care and instruction of children is most diligently and faithfully maintained, *there* the young people are found to adhere most closely to the church of their parents, and to take the most deep and tender interest in its affairs. While, on the contrary, other young people, when neglected by their pastors, and receiving no other instruction than that of the pulpit, though the sermons delivered from that pulpit be ever so enlightened and faithful, are found to be connected with their appropriate church by ties so slender and feeble, that they are ready to go off on the slightest temptation, and perhaps to unite themselves, without scruple, to the most corrupt denominations. Can any reflecting minister think of such a penalty of pastoral unfaithfulness without the deepest humiliation and shame? Can he think of so discharging his official duties as to lead to the probable dispersion and ruin of his flock, without the deepest remorse? If he can, he has not the heart of a faithful minister.

Does a pastor desire to *attach the youth of his charge to his own person; to draw their affections to himself, and prepare the way to render them the affectionate friends and supporters of his old age?* He cannot possibly take a course better adapted to attain his purpose than to meet them stately and often; to instruct them in the bible, and in the accredited catechisms of his church: to do this with unceasing assiduity and affection; and thus to imbue their minds with these elementary truths which he treats more fully and largely in his preaching, and, at the same time, to manifest that he takes a deep and paternal interest in their improvement, and in their temporal and eternal happiness. When an aged pastor grows out of date with his people, and loses his influence over them: especially when the younger part of his flock feel no attraction to him: dislike his preaching, and sigh for another minister; we may generally assume it as a probable fact, that he has neglected the youth of his charge: and that, whatever reason they may have to respect him for his learning, or his worth, in other respects, he has taken no measures to bind their affections to his person; to make every one of them revere and love him as an affection-

ate father; and to connect with his person the strongest sentiments of veneration and filial attachment. Those whose range of observation has been considerable, have, no doubt, seen examples of ministers, whose preaching was by no means very striking or attractive, yet retaining, to the latest period of their lives, the affections of all committed to their care, and especially being the favourite of the young people, who have rallied round them in their old age, and contributed not a little to render their last years both useful and happy. It may be doubted whether such a case ever occurred excepting where the pastor had bestowed much attention on the children of his charge.

Further; does a pastor desire *to win the hearts of parents to the gospel and to his ministry*? It is impossible to devise any means for the attainment of his object, more direct, appropriate, and efficient, than to attend with diligence and kindness to their children. It cannot have escaped the notice of any attentive observer of human affairs, that there is no avenue to the hearts of parents more infallibly open and certain than respectful and affectionate attentions to their children. It would really seem as if they could often bear to be themselves neglected, if their beloved children be followed with manifestations of interest and good will. When ministers, then, in visiting from house to house, pointedly attend to the children of the respective families; mark their number; learn their names; accost them with paternal regard; have a word of kindness and of instruction to address to each; and give to each, if the way be open, a tract, and an affectionate benediction; they not only win the hearts of the children themselves, but they take the most direct means to conciliate the affections of the parents, who are sometimes far more ready to be attracted by these attentions to their children, than if bestowed on their own persons. Instances of the most striking character are recollected in which parents appeared to receive the strongest impressions in favour of particular ministers, and in favour of the cause in which they were engaged, chiefly because those ministers had taken particular notice of their children, had given them affectionate, paternal advice, and appeared to manifest a peculiar interest in their temporal and eternal welfare.

Nor is this all. It is undoubtedly a fact, that, in some cases, one of the best methods of addressing parents on the great subject of religion, is through the medium of their children. In other words, many interesting cases have been

known, in which instruction and exhortation on that great subject, addressed to children in the presence of their parents, have made a deep impression on the latter, when all preceding means had failed; and have been made, by the blessing of God, effectual to their saving conversion. A single example will suffice to explain what is meant. During a powerful and most precious revival which occurred in a neighbouring state, the parents of a charming and highly promising family of children, had remained, during the greater part of the moving scene before them, in a great measure unimpressed and careless. Their pastor had addressed them directly in private, as well as very solemnly in public, but all without any apparent effect. But calling at the house one day, when most of the children were present, he began to speak to *them* exclusively, recommending to them the Saviour, dwelling on the infinite importance of obtaining religion in early life; and solemnly warning them that, if they did not obtain it in youth, every year they receded from the morning of life, the probability would become less and less that they would ever obtain converting grace. The children were, most of them, bathed in tears, and manifested deep, and, as was hoped in regard to some of them, permanent and saving impressions of religion; but, what was still more remarkable, the hearts of the parents, which had never relented before, began to melt, and that very conversation was the means of bringing them to serious reflection; to deep conviction of sin; and, finally, as their friends and the church believed, to a penitent and believing acceptance of the Saviour.

And, when we reflect on the subject, what was there strange in this? What species of address can be conceived more adapted, instrumentally, to fall with peculiar weight and solemnity on the hearts of parents than to hear their children entreated and warned against the folly of procrastination, and against the hardening effect of delay, of which they themselves are living witnesses? What more adapted to cover them with confusion and shame, than to hear a man of God manifesting a deep and tender interest in the salvation of their offspring, toward whom they were conscious that they had never contributed one serious word?

That pastor, then, who does not pay unceasing and diligent attention to the children of his charge, from the mother's lap to adult age; who does not take notice of them; make himself acquainted with them; assemble them to be catechized and instructed every week that he lives; who does not, by every

lawful means, endeavour to attract their attention to himself; to win their affections; to imbue their minds with religious knowledge; and study to prepare them for attending on his ministry with understanding and with profit; who does not, in a word, by all the means in his power, and by every attraction that he can invent, put in the Lord's claim to them, and strive to draw them to the Saviour, is unfaithful to the souls of his people; deficient in one of the most important parts of his ministry; blind to his own official comfort and acceptance; and negligent of a department of duty of which no one can calculate the value, or see the end. In short, he who is most constant in making the young people of his charge the favourite object of his attention, his instruction, and his prayers, studying to win his way to their hearts, and "lead them in the way everlasting," is most "wise to win souls" to Christ, and does most to promote the edification of the church, and the happiness of the world, as well as his own personal enjoyment.

The same great principles apply, in all their force, to *missionary stations*, as well as to *pastoral charges* of the ordinary character. It has been ardently debated whether missionaries among the heathen ought to devote their time entirely to the public preaching of the gospel, or give a considerable portion of it to *schools* for the benefit of the heathen children. It would probably be a great error to contend for *exclusive* attention to either. The preaching of the gospel is God's own ordinance for the conversion of men, and is by no means to be neglected. The missionary is bound to "hold forth the word of life," as often and as extensively as he can find opportunity. He who would neglect this for the sake of using means which he deems better, is chargeable with undertaking to be "wiser than God." But when the gospel is imparted by the living voice, in the school-room, to children, is not this, to all intents and purposes, *preaching*? and when such children are taught the use of language and letters, and the various elementary principles of human knowledge, is not this direct preparation for hearing the gospel? Surely, then, when missionaries conduct schools among the heathen wisely and faithfully, they are as really and directly fulfilling the great duties of their office, as when they address hundreds, or even thousands, from the pulpit. In many cases, missionaries are unable to speak the language of the people to whom they are sent. They must preach, if at all, by an interpreter; and, of course, under all

the disadvantages attending this medium of communication. The *children* of such pagans may be taught, at first, either by means of an interpreter, or by slowly imparting to them the vernacular tongue of the missionaries. But, in whatever way they may be taught, *they* are perhaps, the most hopeful objects of the missionary's labour. Many cases, have, no doubt, occurred, of adult, and even aged pagans being converted to the knowledge and love of the gospel. Not a few trophies of evangelical truth have been found even among the most hardened and degraded slaves of idolatry and moral corruption. So that the encouragement to preach the gospel to adults is unquestionable and ample. But can any one doubt that the richest harvest is to be expected among their children, as well from the direct as the reflex influence of instruction imparted to them? The minds of children, though by nature depraved, are more simple than those of adults; less hardened; less armed with prejudice; less bound to idolatry; less borne away by corrupt habits; less fettered with worldly cares; so that the efforts of a wise, pious and affectionate missionary are more likely, humanly speaking, ultimately to take effect on the youthful than on the adult or aged mind. So that if he neglects the children, or makes them only a secondary object of attention, he miscalculates most egregiously on the probable means of the greatest usefulness. There can be no doubt that, in heathen as well as in Christian lands, children are the hope of the church; and, of course, the most diligent attention to their instruction ought to go hand in hand with that which is directed to the adult population.

But in pagan, as well as in Christian countries, the principles before mentioned apply in all their strength, viz. that one of the best means of exciting the attention, and reaching the hearts of heathen parents, is through the medium of their children. When heathen children are collected in well-governed and well-taught schools at missionary stations, the influence of such schools can scarcely fail of being benign and happy. When the parents visit the schools, and see their children daily improving in knowledge, order, and dutiful behaviour, can they fail of receiving an impression favourable to Christianity and its advocates? When they listen to the instruction given to their children, and see their eyes sparkling with intelligence, and their hearts impressed with truth, will they not be likely to catch something of the sympathetic feeling? And when their children visit them, and begin to speak of Jesus, his condescension, his sufferings

and his love, will they not be more apt to receive favourable impressions, in the first instance, from the lisping statements of those whom they love as their own souls, than from the addresses of strangers whose persons and errand they may regard with some degree of suspicion?

Of all the delusions, therefore, we have ever witnessed, one of the most unhappy, in our opinion, is that which would propose to put down all the schools hitherto maintained by missionaries among the heathen, and to direct all their attention to the labours of the pulpit, or to what is commonly called the public preaching of the gospel. There is infatuation in the proposal. To say nothing of the considerations already suggested, how is a race of *native missionaries* to be raised up but by means of such schools? And if out of every hundred, or even two hundred of the children thus laboriously instructed, *ten*, or even *five*, should be prepared, by the blessing of God, to become enlightened and faithful preachers of the gospel to their countrymen, who would not say, that the schools had yielded a glorious harvest? How narrow and blind the policy which would reject or consent to abandon such a promising instrumentality!

In view of the foregoing remarks, we should be glad to see the following aphorisms pasted up in the study of every minister of the gospel on earth, and regarded as practical maxims of vital importance, as well of indisputable authority, viz.

1. Consider all the children and young people who may be brought within the sphere of your instruction or influence, as the most precious and promising part of your charge, which calls for all your vigilance, skill, labour and prayer.

2. Keep, as far as you can, an exact catalogue of such children; see them as often as you can; and never allow yourself to meet them, without saying and doing something, if practicable, which shall tend to make an impression on their minds favourable to your office, your ministrations, and your Master.

3. When you move about among your people in family visitation, be sure to carry in your pockets some interesting tracts, New Testaments, or other interesting publications, as presents to the children whom you may see. A sufficient stock of these, in ordinary cases, to last a year, might be purchased for twenty-five or thirty dollars, which the ladies in almost any congregation would take pleasure in raising for the purpose of enabling their pastor to perform this duty.

4. Meet all the children of your charge once every week for the purpose of reciting the *Assembly's Catechism*; and accompany the recitation of that formulary with such explanation and prayer as may be adapted to impress the youthful and tender mind.

5. Never content yourself with the instruction given to the children of your charge in the sabbath school. Prize those schools highly; encourage them continually; keep those which are connected with your own church constantly under your own supervision and control; and see that the catechisms of your church are faithfully taught by the instructors. But be not content with this. However excellent and thorough the instruction in the sabbath school, it is of the utmost importance to them, as well as to yourself, that you bring all the children of your charge stately in contact with your own person, that mutual acquaintance and mutual affection may be promoted by the intercourse.

6. Make the recitation of the catechism a serious matter. Many pastors run over it in a hasty manner, and take little or no notice of the failures to recite it well. These failures should always be noticed at the time, recorded in a memorandum book kept for the purpose, and referred to afterwards for quickening or shaming the delinquent.

7. Maintain a *Bible Class*, embracing as many of the children and young people of your charge as you can prevail on to attend. Attend to this class *punctually*;—prepare for it *carefully*; and endeavour to make it subservient to an enlightened and serious study of the scriptures.

8. Let your attention to the children be vigilant, respectful and affectionate. Endeavour to engage their attention, and attract them to your person in every house you enter; and, in general, always endeavour to treat them in such a manner that your visits shall be welcome to them.

9. Take frequent opportunities of speaking to children in the presence and hearing of their parents. Many parents are fond of knowing what is said to their children. And even when *they* would be glad to shun serious conversation, a word addressed to their children in their hearing may be blessed to their everlasting welfare.

10. When you are about to go forth to attend on family calls, spend a few minutes in *prayer*, that your visits and conversation may be blessed to parents and children and servants, wherever you may go. And if you have an opportunity, without forcing or undue urgency, to pray with the

family circle, let your recollection of the children in prayer be as pointed, affectionate and paternal as you can make it.

11. In one word, be it your study to treat all the children and young people of your charge under the solemn impression that they are one day to be men and women, to be a blessing or a curse to the church and the world, and heirs of an eternal heaven or hell; and that your mode of treating them may have a governing influence in making them the one or the other.

ART. III.—*Remarks on the Disuse of Expository Preaching.*

THE pulpit discourses of Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, during several centuries, have been for the most part founded on short passages of scripture; commonly single verses, and oftener less than more. This has become so prevalent, that in most treatises upon the composition of sermons all the canons of homiletics presuppose the treatment of an isolated text. We are not prepared to denounce this practice, especially when we consider the treasury of sound doctrine, cogent reasoning, and mighty eloquence, which is embodied in productions formed on this model, and call to mind the instances in which such discourses have been signally owned of God in the edification of his church. But there is still another method, which, though less familiar to ourselves, was once widely prevalent, and is recognised and approved in our Directory for Worship, in the following words: "It is proper also that large portions of scripture be sometimes expounded, and particularly improved for the instruction of the people in the meaning and use of the sacred oracles."* And it may not be out of place to mention here, that in the debates of the Westminster Assembly, there were more than a few members, and among these the celebrated Calamy, who maintained with earnestness, that it was no part of the minister's duty to read the scriptures in public *without exposition*.†

It is not a little remarkable that in an age in which so much is heard against creeds and systems as contradistin-

* Directory for Worship, Chap. vi. § 2.

† Lightfoot's Works, Vol. xiii. p. 36.