

CONSIDERATIONS ... ON SCHOOLS...1758.

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"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

Mark x. 14.

To encourage Children to do Things with a View to get Praise of Men, to me appears an Obstruction to their being inwardly acquainted with the Spirit of Truth. For it is the Work of the Holy Spirit to direct the Mind to God, that in all our Proceedings we may have a single Eye to him to give Alms in secret, to fast in secret, and labour to keep clear of that Disposition reproved by our Saviour, "But all their Works they do for to be seen of Men." Mat. xxiii. 5.

That Divine Light which enlightens all Men, I believe, does often shine in the Minds of Children very early; and to humbly wait for Wisdom, that our Conduct toward them may tend to forward their Acquaintance with it, and strengthen them in Obedience thereto, appears to me to be a Duty on all of us.

By cherishing the Spirit of Pride and the Love of Praise in them, I believe they may sometimes improve faster in Learning, than otherwise they would; but to take Measures to forward

Children in Learning, which naturally tend to divert their Minds from true Humility, appears to me to savour of the Wisdom of this World.

If Tutors are not acquainted with Sanctification of Spirit, nor experienced in an humble waiting for the Leadings of Truth, but follow the Maxims of the Wisdom of this World, such Children who are under their Tuition, appear to me to be in Danger of imbibing Thoughts and Apprehensions, reverse to that Meekness and Lowliness of Heart, which is necessary for all the true Followers of Christ.

Children at an Age fit for Schools, are in a time of Life which requires the patient Attention of pious People, and if we commit them to the Tuition of such, whose Minds we believe are not rightly prepared to "train them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord," we are in Danger of not acting the Part of faithful Parents toward them; for our Heavenly Father doth not require us to do Evil, that Good may come of it. And it is needful that we deeply examine ourselves, lest we get entangled in the Wisdom of this World, and, through wrong Apprehensions, take such Methods in Education as may prove a great Injury to the Minds of our Children.

It is a lovely Sight to behold innocent Children and when they

are sent to such Schools, where their tender Minds are in imminent Danger of being led astray by Tutors who do not live a self-denying Life, or by the Conversation of such Children who do not live in Innocence, it is a Case much to be lamented.

While a pious Tutor hath the Charge of no more Children than he can take due Care of, and keeps his Authority in the Truth, the good Spirit in which he leads and governs, works on the Minds of such who are not hardened, and his Labours not only tend to bring them forward in outward Learning, but to open their Understandings with respect to the true Christian Life. But where a Person hath Charge of too many, and his Thoughts and Time are so much employed in the outward Affairs of his School, that he does not so weightily attend to the Spirit and Conduct of each Individual, as to be enabled to administer rightly to all in due Season; through such Omission, he not only suffers as to the State of his own Mind, but the Minds of the Children are in Danger of Suffering also.

To watch the Spirit of Children, to nurture them in Gospel Love, and labour to help them against that which would mar the Beauty of their Minds, is a Debt we owe them: and a faithful Performance of our Duty, not only tends to their lasting Benefit and our own Peace, but also to render their Company agreeable to us.

Instruction, thus administered, reaches the pure Witness in the Minds of such Children who are not hardened, and begets Love in them toward those who thus lead them on. But where too great a Number are committed to a Tutor, and he, through much Cumber, omits a careful Attention to the Minds of Children, there is Danger of Disorders gradually increasing amongst them, till the Effects thereof appear in their Conduct, too strong to be easily remedied.

A Care hath lived on my Mind, that more Time might be employed by Parents at Home, and by Tutors at School, in weightily attending to the Spirit and Inclinations of Children, and that we may so lead, instruct, and govern them, in this tender Part of Life, that nothing may be omitted in our Power, to help them on their Way to become the Children of our Father who is in Heaven.

Meditating on the Situation of Schools in our Provinces, my Mind hath, at Times, been affected with Sorrow; and under these Exercises it hath appeared to me, that if those who have large Estates, were faithful Stewards, and laid no Rent nor Interest, nor other Demand, higher than is consistent with universal Love; and those in lower Circumstances would, under a moderate Employ, shun unnecessary Expense, even to the smallest Article; and all unite in humbly seeking to the Lord, he would graciously instruct us, and strengthen us, to relieve the Youth from various Snares, in which many of them are entangled.

