

AN ESSAY ON FAMILY PRAYER

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An Essay on Family Prayer by Charles Bridges

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CHARLES BRIDGES

**AN ESSAY ON
FAMILY PRAYER**

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ON
FAMILY PRAYER.

BY THE
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OLD NEWTON VICARAGE.
APRIL 15, 1847.

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ON FAMILY PRAYER.

THE inspired aphorism—"Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"¹—beams with Divine glory and animating hope. Everything, therefore, that tends to promote godliness, tends in the same measure to increase our happiness and our usefulness—our meetness for the work of God here, and for His kingdom hereafter. That gracious dispensation, by which "God setteth the solitary in families,"² opens a wide

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

² Psalm lxxviii. 5; Comp. cxlii. 3.

and most important sphere for the extension of this holy principle. Here it is that a "seed is raised up for the service of the Redeemer."¹ Christian families, in their enlarging circles, are, as Howe beautifully expresses it, 'Divine plantations settled by God Himself for this very end and purpose, to be nurseries of religion and godliness.'² It would appear indeed that family religion will be one of the distinguishing signs of that grand era, for which the Church is waiting with joyous expectation.—"*In the latter days—at the same time*, saith the Lord, I will be the God of *all the families* of Israel," (not only the God of the nations, but distributively, *of their families*,) "and they shall be my people."³ Every means, therefore, of advancing family religion is a

¹ Pa. xxii. 30.

² Works, v. 396; Comp. Pa. xlii. 13.

³ Jer. xxxi. 24; xxxi. 1.

component part of the constraining obligation—"hasting unto the coming of the day of God."¹ Among the means conducive to this great end, family worship must take its place. For as personal religion cannot exist or be sustained without personal prayer; so neither can we identify family religion without family prayer, or fail to number this daily privileged service as a most valuable ordinance of social godliness.

If it be asked, on what ground of obligation it stands, the reply is obvious. *It is involved in the natural order of things.* The holy ordinance of marriage was primarily appointed for the successive transmission of "a godly seed;"² yet this result cannot be obtained without an active ministration of all suitable means. Here, then, we are brought to the family altar as a

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 12.

² Mal. ii. 15.

mean indispensable for the due fruitfulness of the social institution. For every such connexion forms a separate independent community, under the superintendence of one head, and governed by its own laws, where each member is bound to the body by ties so sacred and tender, that all other affinities are comparatively loose and contingent. How naturally, therefore, are we led in this sphere of family unity to meet around the throne of our heavenly Father in mutual sympathy, acknowledging our many undeserved mercies, and telling out in behalf of each other the wants, sins, trials, and weaknesses common to us all! If the being of this society is from God, the acknowledgment of dependence upon Him in the daily service of prayer and praise is the revenue of glory justly due to His name.