

Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing*. Printed for John Budge, 1616. Edited by Bianey

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Chapter I.

The occasion of writing this book was the consideration of the care that parents have for their children. My children, when I did truly weighed, rightly considered, and perfectly see the great care, labor, travail^o, and continual *struggle* study, which parents take to enrich their children, some wearing their bodies with labor, some breaking their sleep with care, some sparing from their own bellies, and many hazarding their souls, some by bribery, some by simony¹, others by perjury, and a multitude by usury, some stealing on the sea, others begging by land portions from every poor man, not caring if the whole common-wealth be impoverished, so their children be enriched: for themselves they can be content with meat, drink, and clothing, so that their children by their means may be made rich, always abusing this portion of Scripture: "He that provideth not for his own family, is worse than an Infidell."² ever seeking for the temporal things of this world, and forgetting those things which bee eternal: when I considered these things, I say, I thought good (being not desirous to enrich you with transitory goods) to exhort and desire you to follow the counsel of Christ: "First seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all *given* these things shall be administered^o unto you."³

¹ A simony is the buying or selling of church items (pardons or blessings)

² 1 Timothy 5:8- When you do not provide for your family, it directly goes against your faith.

³ Matthew 6:33- Once you are following God's will, everything you worry for will be given to you.

Chapter. 2.

The first cause of writing, is a Motherly affection. But in case you should
maruaile^o; my children, why I do not, according to the usual custom of women,
exhort^o you by word and admonitions^o, rather then by writing, a thing so
unusual among us, and especially in such a time, when there be so many godly
books in the world, that they mold in some mens studies, while their Masters are
made, because they will not meditate upon them; as many mens garments
motheaten in their chests⁴, while their Christian brethren quake with cold in the
street for want of covering; know therefore, that it was the motherly affection
that I bear unto you all, which made me now (as it often has done before now)
forget myself in regard of you: neither care I what you or any shall think of me,
if among many words I may write but one sentence, which may make you labor
for the spiritual food of the soul, which must be gathered every day out of the
word, as the children of Israel gathered Manna in the wilderness.⁵ By which
you may see it is a labor: but what labor? a pleasant labor, a profitable labor: a
labor without which the soul cannot live.

*wonder
urge
warnings*

For as the children of Israel must needs starve, except they gathered
every day in the wilderness and fed of it, so must your souls, except you gather
the spiritual Manna⁶ out of the word everyday, and feed of it continuously: for as
they by this Manna comforted their hearts, strengthened their bodies, and

⁴ James 5:2- Many people that are rich end up getting corrupted and ruined.

⁵ Exodus 16- In this chapter, God provided food to the Israelites for them to be able to stay alive.

⁶ Manna was the food that God provided to the Israelites while they were in the desert.

preserved their lives; so by this heavenly Word of God, you shall comfort your souls, make them strong in Faith, and grow in true Godliness, and finally preserve them with great joy, to everlasting life, through Faith in Christ; whereas if you desire any food for your souls, that is not in the written Word of God, your souls die with it even in your hearts and mouths; even as they, that desired other food, died with it in their mouths, were it never so dainty: so shall you, and there is no recovery for you.

Chapter 3.

The best labor is for the food of the Soul. Oh my children, is not this a comfortable labor? Our Savior Christ saith, “labor not for the meate that perisheth, but for the meate that endureth to everlasting life:”⁷ and yet I see and fear, you shall see how many there be that cross Christ in these words: nay rather, cross themselves: for, contrary to our blessed Saviors counsel, they labor for the meats that perish, and in the meantime they lose the food of everlasting life. This (my beloved sons and dear children) this is the cause that make me so much to fear you, and those who hear after shall come of you, because I see so many that regard not the words of our Savior Christ, who came from the high Throne of God, and preached to us, and prayed for us, and took our flesh upon him, and kept it without sin, refusing no company, healing every sickness and disease, fed the hungry, gave pardon to every sinner that would but ask it, died

⁷ John 6:27- Worry not for things that won't last in mortal life, but worry for what is in eternal life.

for us, indured the pains of hell for us, yea, more then this, even in our own flesh
he overcame sin, death, and hell; yea, and more then that also, he carried our
flesh into Heaven in the sight of many, and there keeps it, and is become a
Mediatour^o for us in it; he joined himself to us in our flesh, as it is written, "He
took our flesh upon him:" he taught us to join our flesh unto him by faith, that
"Where he is, there we might be with him also."⁸ and if we will not follow him,
that has done all this for us, and much more then I can write or declare, how
unthankfull shall we show our selves?

peacemaker

My deare Children, have I not cause to fear? the holy Ghost saith by the
Prophet, "Can a Mother forget the child of her womb?"⁹ As if he should say, Is it
possible, that she, which has carried her child within her, so near her heart, and
brought it forth into this world with so much bitter pain, so many groans and
cries, can forget it? nay rather, will she not labor now till Christ is formed in it?
will she not bless it every time it sucks on her breasts, when she feels the blood
come from her heart to nourish it? Will she not instruct it in the youth, and
admonish^o it in the age, and pray for it continually? Will she not be afraid, that
the child which she endured such pain for, should endure endless pain in hell?
Could Saint Paul say unto the Galathians, that were but strangers to him
concerning the flesh, only he had spent some time amongst them to bring them
to the profession of the truth, from which he feared they would fall: and could
he, I say, write to them, "My little children, of whom I doe travaile againe in

criticize

⁸ John 14:3- Jesus will come back for the believers, and they shall have eternal life.

⁹ Isaiah 49:15- It is not likely for a Mother to forget that she has a child.

birth, until Christ be formed in you?"¹⁰ And can any man blame a mother (who indeed brought forth her child with much pain) though she labored again till Christ was formed in them?

Could Saint Paul wish himself separated from God for his brethren's sake: and will not a mother venture to offend the world for her children's sake? Therefore let no man blame a mother, though she somewhat exceeded in writing to her children, since every man knows, that the love of a mother to her children, is hardly contained within the bounds of reason. Neither must you, my sons, when you come to be of judgement, blame me for writing to you, since Nature tells me, that I cannot long be here to speak to you, and this my mind will continue long after my writing; and yet not my mind, but I seek to put you in mind of the words of our Saviour Christ, which saith "labor not for the meat that perisheth, &c."¹¹ where you see, that the food of the soul is to be gotten by labor. Why stand you here (says Christ?) here is no time to be idle: they that will rest with Christ in heaven, must labor to follow him here on earth. "Blessed are the dead, which dye in the Lord: for they rest from their labor."¹² Thus you see, if you will go to the place, which Christ has bought for you, you must labor to follow Christ: he labored to get it for you, or else all your labor would have been as nothing; and now you must labor to lay hold on him, or else all your labor will be worth nothing.

¹⁰ Galatians 4:19- Paul worked hard to get the Galatians to where they were and he was worried that they would stray from the Lord.

¹¹ John 6:27

¹² Revelation 14:13- Those who die while believing in the Lord will be rewarded for their labor.

Many there be that labor the clean contrary way; for they leave Christ, and take hold of traditions: and a number loyter^o, and by that means never get hold on Christ. And this is the cause why I write unto you, that you might never fly from him with the one, nor yet loiter with the other, but that you might learn to follow him, and to take hold of him in the written Word of God, where you shall find him (as Christ himself witnessed) and no where else. “Search the Scriptures,” says he, “for they testify of me.” labor therefore, that you may come unto Christ.

Chapter 4.

The second cause is, to encourage them to write. The second cause, my sons, why I write unto you (for you may think that had I had but one cause, I would not have changed the usual order of women, it is needful to be known, and may do much good. For where I saw the great mercy of God toward you, in making you men, and placing you amongst the wise, where you may learn the true written Word of God, which is the path-way to all happiness, and which will bring you to the chief City, new Jerusalem, and the seven liberal sciences, where you shall have at least a superficial sight in all things: I thought it fit to give you good example, and by writing to request you, that when it shall please God to give both virtue and grace with your learning, he having made you men, that you may write and speake the Word of God without offending any, that then you would remember to write a book unto your children, of the right and true way to happiness, which may remain with them and theirs forever.

Chapter 5.

The third cause is to move women to be careful of their children. The third is, to encourage women (who, I fear, will blush at my boldness) not to be ashamed to show their infirmities^o, but to give men the first and chief place: yet let us labor to come in the second; and because we must needs confess, that sin entered by us into our posterity, let us shew how carefull we are to seek to Christ to cast it out of us, and our posterity, and how fearful we are that our sin should sinke^o any of them to the lowest part of the earth; wherefore let us call upon them to follow Christ, who will carry them to the height of heaven.

illnesses
drop

Chapter 6.

The fourth cause is to arm them against poverty. The fourth cause is to desire you, that you will never fear poverty, but always know, it is the state of the children of God to be poor in the world. Christ says, “Ye shall have the poore with you alwaies.”¹³ It may be he has appointed you to be of this poor number: do not strive against Christ. “It is as hard for a rich man to enter into

¹³ John 12:8 and Matthew 26:11- You will always be surrounded by the poor, however, I will not always be around.

heaven, as for a Camell to goe thorow the eye of a needle.”¹⁴ Saint James says “Woe be to you that are rich.”¹⁵ S. Paul says, “The desire of money is the root of all evil.” Which if it be true, as it is not to be doubted of, and you fear poverty, then does it necessarily follow, that you will desire the root of all evil, which is money, and so become good for nothing.

The fear of poverty makes men run into a thousand sins, which nothing else could draw them to: for many fearing cold storms of poverty, which never last long, run on to the hot fire of hell, which never has an end. This matter requires many words, for it is hard to persuade the nature of man from the fear of poverty: therefore I will speak more of that afterwards: only I now say, Fear not to be poor with Lazarus, but fear a thousand times to be rich with Dives.¹⁶

¹⁴ Matthew 19:24- It is hard to go to heaven when you are so hung up on material things in life.

¹⁵ Luke 6:24-While you may be comfortable now in the world, in eternal life, the poor will be blessed.

¹⁶ Luke 16:19-31 This is a parable in the bible that shows what happens when you are rich, and don't give the poor the time of day. In the parable it shows that your riches do not transfer to Heaven, but your transgressions do.