

THE
Young Christian's
FIRST
Lesson-Book :

CONTAINING
THE PRINCIPLES OF THE
Christian Religion,
EXPRESSED IN PLAIN AND EASY VERSE,
And divided into Short LESSONS, for the
Use of little CHILDREN.

By P. DODDRIDGE, D D.

*JESUS said unto Peter, Lovest thou me?
Feed my Lambs.—JOHN XXI. 15.*



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P R E F A C E.

THE little Verses now before the Reader were written at the desire of my most worthy and honoured friend, the Rev. Mr. Clark, of St. Albans; and are published at his request, as what he hopes may, by the divine blessing, do some good in the rising generation. I was the more willing to undertake the task, because I had often observed, with how much ease and pleasure children learn verses by heart how fond they are of repeating them, and by consequence, how much longer they retain them, than they do what they learn in prose.

In this view Dr Watts' Songs for Children have been a singular blessing to our land; and it is but justice to that great yet condescending writer, to own that if this little essay be of any service in it, a great part of the thanks will be due to him who had digested the Chief Heads of Christianity: And if I had not the patronage of such illustrious names as have gone before me in such humble labours, I should think myself unworthy the honour of calling Jesus my Master, if I thought it beneath me to be desirous of doing good to the least child of the poorest of the people.

That simplicity and ease which may suit children, I have been always careful to maintain; and have endeavoured here and there, where I conveniently could to strike the fancy with a little imagery, and especially to affect the hearts of my dear little Scholars, by giving a serious and practical turn to the several
truths

truths which are delivered. It has also been my great care to insert nothing into these Verses but what, I apprehend, the generality of serious Christians believe, so that I hope they will suit different denominations; as indeed I could wish the rising age might be instructed in what is like to unite rather than divide us; their own comfort, as well as the credit of our common Christianity is much concerned in it.

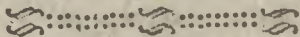
No nation under heaven appears to me so well furnished with helps for the Christian education of children, as our own. I heartily pray that parents may be diligent in using them and that they may enforce their good instructions with a suitable example; and then I doubt not but, through the divine blessing, the happy fruits will be visible; nor will a gracious God, who takes pleasure in the prosperity of his people, forget the least pious and benevolent attempt, for promoting a good work.

NORTHAMPTON, }
Oct. 31, 1743. }

P. DODDRIDGE.



THE
YOUNG CHRISTIAN'S
First Lesson-Book.



LESSON I.

*Of our own Nature, and its chief glory
and happiness.*

NOW for a while aside I'll lay
My childish trifles and my play,
And call my thoughts, which rove abroad,
To view myself, and view my God:
I'll look within, that I may see
What I now am, what I must be.

I am the Creature of the Lord;
He made me by his pow'ful word:
This body in each curious part
Was wrought by his unfailing art;
From him my nobler spirit came,
My soul a spark of heavenly flame:
That soul, by which my body lives,
Which thinks, and hopes and joys and grieves,
And must in heaven or hell remain,
When flesh is turn'd to dust again.

What business then should I attend?
Or what esteem my noblest end?
Sure it consists in this alone,
That God my Maker may be known;
So known, that I may love him still,
And form my actions by his will;
That he may bless me whilst I live,
And when I die, my soul receive,

To dwell for ever in his sight,
In perfect knowledge and delight.

LESSON II.

*The knowledge of God and our duty, to be
learned from the Bible.*

HOW shall a little infant learn
This great, this infinite concern,
What my Almighty Maker is,
And what the way this God to please?
Shall some bright angel spread his wing,
The welcome message down to bring?
Or must we dig beneath the ground,
Deep as where silver mines are found?

I bless his name for what I hear;
The word of life and truth is near:
His gospel sounds through all our land,
Bibles are lodg'd in every hand;
That sacred Book, inspir'd by God,
In our own tongue is spread abroad:
That Book may little children read,
And learn the knowledge which they need.
I'll place it still before my eyes,
For there my hope and treasure lies.

LESSON III.

*Of the Nature and Attributes of the
blessed God.*

GOD is a Spirit none can see,
He ever was, and e'er shall be;

Present where, e'er his creatures dwell,
Thro' earth and sea, thro' heav'n and hell!

His eye, with infinite survey,
Views all their realms in full display
What has been, is, or shall be done,
Or here, or there, to him is known;
Nor can one thought arise unseen,
In mind of angels, or of men.
Yet far above all anxious cares,
Calmly he rules his grand affairs;
While wisdom infinite attends
By surest means the noblest ends.

Majestic from his lofty throne
He speaks, and all his will is done:
Nor can united worlds withstand
The force of his almighty hand.
Yet ever righteous are his ways,
Faithful and true what'er he lays:
The holy, holy, holy Lord,
By all th' angelic host ador'd.

The bounty of his gracious hands,
Wide as the world he made extends;
And tho' himself compleatly blest'd,
With pity looks on the distress'd;
And by his Son, our Saviour dear,
To sinners brings salvation near.

All that is glorious, good, and great,
Does in the Lord JEHOVAH meet,
Then to his name be glory giv'n,
By all on earth, and all in heaven.

LESSON IV.

Of God's Relation to us.

THE Lord my Maker I adore,
 Created by his love and pow'r.
 He fashion'd in their various forms
 And all their well rang'd orders stand
 Supported by his pow'rful hand.

Father of light! Amidst the skies
 He bids the golden sun arise!
 He scatters the refreshing rain.
 To cheer the grats, and swell the grain
 And ev'ry day presents the food.
 And satisfies my mouth with good.

At home, abroad, by night, by day,
 He is my guardian, and my stay:
 And sure 'tis fit my soul should know,
 He is my Lord and sov'reign too.
 Oh! may that voice, that speaks his law,
 My heart to sweet obedience draw,
 That when I see the Judge descend,
 In that Judge may see my friend.

LESSON V.

The Sum of our Duty to God and Man.

THE knowledge which my heart desires
 Is but to learn what God requires.
 Speak then the word, my Father dear,
 For all my soul's awake to hear:
 And oh! what joy my breast must move,
 To hear that all thy law is LOVE!

This is the sum of ev'ry part:
 To love the Lord with all my heart,
 With all my soul, with all my might,
 And in his service to delight:
 That I should love my neighbour too,
 And what I wish from them should do.

How short and sweet, how good and plain,
 Easy to learn and to retain!
 O may thy grace my soul renew!
 And 'twill be sweet to practise too.

LESSON VI.

How our Love to God is to be expressed.

SINCE love is as my duty known,
 How must this love to God be shown?
 Sure I the highest thoughts should raise
 Of Him, who is above all praise!
 His favour most of all desire
 And still to please him should aspire;
 To him be constant worship paid,
 And all his sacred laws obey'd.

If to afflict me be his will,
 I'll bear it with submission still:
 A tender Father sure he proves,
 And but corrects because he loves.

His word with diligence I'll hear,
 To him present my daily pray'r;
 And while new mercies I implore,
 For blessings past I will adore:
 And every action shall express
 A heart full charg'd with thankfulness.

LESSON VII.

*How Love to our Neighbour should
be expressed.*

I By my love to men must prove
How cordially my God I love.
To those whom he hath cloth'd with pow'r;
I would be subject ev'ry hour:
To Parents, and to Rulers too,
Pay honour and obedience due:
In ev'ry word would truth preserve,
Nor let one act from justice swerve.

In all my feeble hands can do,
The good of all I would pursue:
And where my pow'rs of action fail,
Kind wishes in my heart prevail
For ev'ry man, whoe'er he be,
Stranger, or friend, or enemy.

Since by God's pard'ning grace I live,
Well may I all my foes forgive;
And, as Christ's word and pattern shew'd,
Conquer their evil by my good.

LESSON VIII.

*Sins to be avoided in Thought, Words,
and Action.*

GUARD me, O God, from ev'ry sin;
Let heart and tongue, and life be clean;
Tho' with ten thousand snares beset,
I never would my Lord forget.

Fain would I learn to lay aside
 Malice, and stubbornness and pride,
 Envy and ev'ry evil thought;
 Nor be my breast with anger hot:
 Each other passion, wild and rude,
 I long to feel by grace subdu'd.

When thus my heart is well prepar'd,
 My tongue I easily shall guard
 From ev'ry oath, and curse profane,
 Nor take God's rev'rend name in vain:
 No sacred thing shall I deride,
 Nor scoff, nor rail, nor brawl, nor chide:
 My soul will ev'ry lie detest,
 And ev'ry base indecent jest.

This humble watchful soul of mine
 Shall with abhorrence then decline
 The drunkard's cup, the glutton's feast,
 That sink the man down to the beast:
 Th' injurious blow, the wanton eye,
 The loss of hours that quickly fly,
 And that which leads to ev'ry crime,
 The vain mispence of sacred time;
 What brings dishonour on God's law,
 Or what on man would mischief draw.

LESSON IX.

*The Corruption of Nature and Sins of Life
 acknowledged.*

LORD, when my wretched soul surveys
 The various follies of my ways,

'The guilt of ev'ry word and thought,
 Ev'ry neglect and ev'ry fault,
 Well may I tremble to appear,
 Laden with horror, shame and fear.

Adam, our common head, alas!
 Brought sin and death on all his race:
 From him my ruin'd nature came,
 Heir to his sorrow, and his shame;
 My body weak, and dark my mind,
 To good averse, to sin inclin'd:
 And oh! too soon the deadly fruit
 Ripen'd from that unhappy root.

Duty requir'd my early care
 Each fond indulgence to forbear;
 Requir'd me, all the good I knew
 With constant vigour to pursue:
 But my vain heart and stubborn will;
 In its own ways would wander still;
 Like a wild ass's colt would go
 On to the wilderness of woe.
 Vainly I seek to plead a word,
 Silent in guilt before the Lord.

LESSON X.

Of the Misery which Sin hath brought upon us.

WHO can abide God's wrath, or stand
 Before the terrors of his hand?
 Jehovah's curse what heart shall dare
 To meet? or what be strong to bear

He every good can take away,
 And ev'ry ev'len us lay:

Can by one single word bring down
 The tallest head that wears a crown;
 The Statesman wife, the warrior brave,
 To moulder in the silent grave;
 And send the wretched soul to hell,
 To the fierce flames where devils dwell!
 For endless years to languish there,
 In pangs of infinite despair!

I then, poor feeble child, how soon
 Must I dissolve before his frown!
 And yet his frowns and vengeance too,
 I, by my sins, have made my due.

Is here no hope?—And must I die?
 Is there no friend, no helper nigh?
 Is it beyond repeal decreed,
 That ev'ry soul that sins must bleed?
 Oh! let my longing trembling ear
 Some sound of grace and pardon hear!
 My soul would the first news embrace,
 And turn its trembling into praise.

LESSON XI.

*Of the Gospel, or the Good News of Salvation
 by CHRIST.*

WHAT joyful tidings do I hear?
 'Tis gospel-grace salutes my ear;
 And by that gentle sound I find
 This righteous God is mild and kind.

Jesus, his only Son, displays
 The wonders of his Father's grace:
 The great salvation, long foretold
 By Prophets to the Jews of old,

Is now in plainer words made known,
 As to th' Apostles clearly shown;
 By this blest message brought from heav'n,
 Pardon, and peace, and grace is giv'n.

Oh! may I know that Saviour dear,
 Whom God has represented there!
 And that eternal life receive,
 Which he was sent by God to give!

LESSON XII.

Who CHRIST is, and how he lived on Earth.

JESUS! how bright his glories shine!
 The great *Emmanuel* is divine;
 One with the Father he appears,
 And all his Father's honours shares;
 Yet he, to bring salvation down,
 Has put our mortal nature on.

He in an humble Virgin's womb
 A feeble infant did become;
 A stable was his lodging made,
 And the rude manger was his bed.

Growing in life he still was seen
 Humble, laborious, poor, and mean;
 The Son of God from year to year,
 Did as a carpenter appear.

At length, when he to preach was sent,
 Through towns and villages he went,
 And travel'd with unwearied zeal,
 God's will and nature to reveal.

To prove the heav'nly truths he taught,
 Unnumber'd miracles were wrought:

The blind beheld him, and the ear,
 Which had been deaf, his voice could hear;
 Sick: efs obey'd his healing hand,
 And devils fled at his command!
 The lame, for joy around him leap;
 The dead he wakens from their sleep!

Through all his life his doctrine shines,
 Drawn in the plainest, fairest lines;
 And death at length he did sustain,
 Our pardon, and our peace to gain;
 That sinners, who condemned stood,
 Might gain salvation by his blood.
 All honour then ascribed be
 To him who liv'd and dy'd for me!

LESSON XIII.

Of CHRIST'S Death, Resurrection and Ascension.

JESUS, the Righteous, he dies,
 For sin a spotless sacrifice!
 Justice has on his sacred head
 The weight of our transgressions laid!
 If God's own Son would sinners save,
 He must be humbled to the grave,
 That so a pard'ning God might shew
 What vengeance to our crimes was due.

Nail'd to the cross with torturing smart,
 What anguish rack'd his tender heart!
 Alas! how bitterly he cried,
 Tasted the vinegar, and died!
 Cold in the tomb that mournful day
 My Saviour's mangled body lay.

Well may I blush and weep to see
What Jesus bore for love of me.

But O! my soul, thy grief refrain,
Jesus the Saviour lives again:
On the third day the Conqu'ror rose,
And greatly triumph'd o'er his foes;
Prov'd his recover'd life, and then
Ascending to his heaven again.

Exalted on a shining throne,
At God's right hand he sets him down,
To plead the merits of his blood.
And rule for all his people's good:
Wide o'er all worlds his pow'r extends,
And well can he protect his friends.
May I in that blest band appear,
Secure from danger, and from fear!

LESSON XIV.

Of the Nature of Faith and Repentance.

THEY must repent, and must believe,
Who Christ's salvation would receive.
Oh! may thy Spirit faith impart,
And work repentance in my heart!

Bless'd Jesus, who can be so base,
As to suspect thy pow'r, or grace!
Or who can e'er so stupid be
To slight thy blessings, Lord, and thee!
With humble rev'rend hope and love,
I to thy gracious feet would move,
And to thy care my all resign,
Resolv'd to be for ever thine;

Secure, if thou vouchsafe to keep
My feeble soul among thy sheep.

The sins and follies I have done,
Humbled in dust I would bemoan;
And while past guilt I thus deplore,
I would repeat that guilt no more,
But by a life of zeal and love,
True faith and penitence approve:
So shall thy grace my sins forgive,
Jesus shall smile, and I shall live.

LESSON XV.

*Of the Assistances and Influences of
the blessed SPIRIT.*

'TIS not in my weak pow'r alone,
To melt this stubborn heart of stone,
My soul to change, my life to mend,
Or seek to Christ, that gen'rous friend.

'Tis God's own Spirit from above,
Fixes our faith, inflames our love,
And makes a life divine begin
In wretched souls, long dead in sin.

That most important gift of Heav'n,
To those that ask and seek is giv'n:
Then be it my immediate care,
With importunity of pray'r
To seek it in a Saviour's name,
Who will not turn my hopes to shame.

God from on high his grace shall pour;
My soul shall flourish more and more,
Press on with speed from grace to grace,
Till glory end and crown the race.

Since then the Father, and the Son,
 And holy Spirit, Three in One,
 Glorious beyond all speech and thought,
 Have jointly my salvation wrought,
 I'll join them in my songs of praise,
 Now, and thro' Heav'n's eternal days.

LESSON XVI.

*Of the Means of Grace which God
 has appointed*

WHAT kind provision God has made,
 That we may safe to heav'n be led!
 For this the prophets preach'd and wrote,
 For this the blest'd apostles taught,
 Taught, as that Spirit did inspire,
 Who fell from heav'n in tongues of fire,
 And gave them languages unknown,
 That distant lands his grace might own.
 His hand has kept the sacred page
 Secure from man's and devil's rage.

For this he churches did ordain,
 His truth and worship to maintain:
 For this he pastures did provide,
 In those assemblies to preside:
 And from the round of common days
 Mark'd out our Sabbaths to his praise.
 Delightful day, when Christians meet,
 To hear, to pray, and sing, ho! sweet!

For this he gives in solemn days,
 Appointed tokens of his grace;
 In sacramental pledges there,
 His soldiers to their general swear.

Baptiz'd into one common Lord,
 They joyful meet around his board;
 Honour the orders of his house,
 And speak their love, and seal their vows.

LESSON XVII.

Of the Design and Obligation of Baptism.

IN Baptism wash'd we all must be,
 In honour of the sacred Three.
 To shew how we are wash'd from sin
 In Jesus' blood, and born again
 By grace divine—and thus are made
 Members of Christ, our common head.

The Father form'd the glorious scheme,
 And we adopted are by him.

The Son, great prophet, priest, and king,
 Did news of this redemption bring:
 He by his death our life procur'd,
 And now bestows it as our Lord.

The holy Spirit witness bore
 To this blest gospel heretofore:
 And teaches those he's purify'd
 Faithful and patient to abide.

Into these names was I baptiz'd;
 And be the honour justly priz'd:
 Nor let the sacred bond be broke,
 Nor be my covenant-God forsook.
 Thus wash'd, I'd keep my garments clean,
 And never more return to sin.
 One body now all Christian: are:
 Oh! may they in one spirit share!

And cherish that endearing love,
In which the saints are blest'd above!

LESSON XVIII.

On the Nature and Design of the Lord's Supper.

THE mem'ry of Christ's death is sweet,
When saints around his table meet,
And break the bread, and pour the wine,
Obedient to his word divine.

As they the bread and cup receive,
So while on Christ their souls believe,
They eat his flesh, they drink his blood:
Cordial divine, and heavenly food!
Their cov'nant thus with God renew,
And love to ev'ry Christian shew.

Well may their souls rejoice, and thrive:
Oh! may the blessed hour arrive,
When ripe in knowledge, and in grace,
I at thy board may find a place!
And now what there his people do,
I would at humble distance view;
Would look to Christ with grateful heart,
And in their pleasures take my part;
Resolv'd, while such a sight I see,
To live to him who dy'd for me.

LESSON XIX.

Of the Nature and Office of Angels.

MY soul, the heav'nly world survey,
The regions of eternal day.

There Jesus reigns, and round his seat
Millions of glorious angels meet.

Those morning stars how bright they shine!
How sweetly all their voices join
To praise their Maker!—watchful still,
To mark the signals of his will;
While with their out-stretch'd wings they stand,
To fly at his divine command.

All happy as they are, and great,
Yet scorn they not on men to wait;
And little children in their arms
They gently bear, secure from harms.

Oh! may I, with such humble zeal,
My heav'nly Father's word fulfil,
That I, when time has run his race,
May with blest'd angels find a place,
Born on their friendly wings on high,
To joys like theirs, which never die.

LESSON XX.

Of the Fall, and State of the Devils.

WELL may I tremble, when I read
That sin did heav'n itself invade:
Curs'd pride, with subtilty unknown,
Perverted angels near God's throne!
They sinn'd against his holy name,
And hateful devils they became!
But wrath divine pursu'd them soon,
And flaming vengeance hurl'd them down!

Now, in the pangs of fierce despair,
Pris'ners at large they rage in air,

Walk through the earth unheard, unseen,
 And lay their snares for thoughtless men;
 Tempt us to sin against our God,
 And draw us to hell's downward road.

But God can all their power restrain,
 My Saviour holds them in his chain,
 Till at his bar they all appear,
 And meet their final sentence there.

LESSON XXI.

On Death.

LORD I confess thy sentence just,
 That sinful man should turn to dust;
 That I e'er long should yield my breath,
 The captive of all conquering death.

Soon will the awful hour appear,
 When I must quit my dwelling here;
 These active limbs, to worms a prey,
 In the cold grave must waste away;
 Nor shall I share in all that's done,
 In this wide world, beneath the sun.

To distant climes, and seats unknown,
 My naked spirit must be gone;
 To God its Maker must return,
 And ever joy, or ever mourn.

No room for penitence and pray'r,
 No farther preparation there
 Can e'er be made; the thought is vain,
 My state unalterable must remain.

Awake my soul, without delay,
 That if God summons thee this day,

'Thou cheerful at his call may'st rise,
And spring to life beyond the skies!

LESSON XXII.

On the Resurrection of the Dead.

WHAT awful ruins death hath made!
How low the wise and great are laid!
Alike the saints and sinners die;
Mould'ring alike in dust they lie:
But there's a day shall change the scene,
How awful to the sons of men!

When the archangel's trump shall sound,
And shake the air, and cleave the ground,
Jesus inthron'd in light appears,
Circled with angels, bright as stars!
"Rise ye that sleep!" the Lord shall say;
And all the earth, and all the sea,
Yield up the nations of the dead,
For ages in their bowels hid.
Bone knows its kindred bone again,
All cloth'd anew with flesh and skin;
Each spirit knows its proper mate;
They rise an army vast and great.

But, oh! what different marks they bear,
Of transport some, and some of fear;
When marshall'd in the Judge's sight,
These to the left, those to the right,
That they may that last sentence hear,
Which shall their endless state declare!
My soul, in deep attention stay,
And learn th' event of such a day!

LESSON XXIII.

Of Judgment and Eternity. Heaven and Hell.

WHEN Christ to judge the world descends,
 Thus shall he say to all his friends,
 "Come, blessed souls! that kingdom share,
 "My Father did for you prepare,
 "Ere earth was founded—Come and reign,
 "Where endless life and joy remain."

Then to the wicked—"Cursed crew!
 "Depart. Heav'n is no place for you;
 "To those eternal burnings go,
 "Whose pangs the rebel angels know."

He speaks, and straight his shining bands,
 With fiery thunders in their hands
 Drives them away—Hell's lakes receive
 The wretches on its flaming waves!
 Justice divine the gates shall bar,
 And for a seal affix despair!

While Jesus, rising from his throne,
 Leads his triumphant army on,
 To enter their divine abode.
 In the fair city of their God!
 There everlasting pleasures grow!
 Full rivers of salvation flow!
 And all their happiness appears
 Increasing with eternal years.

LESSON XXIV.

*The Conclusion in a practical Reflection,
on the Whole.*

AND now, my heart, with rev'rend awe,
From hence thine own instruction draw,
I at this judgement must appear;
I must this solemn sentence hear,
[As I'm with saints or sinners plac'd.]
"Depart accur'd;" or "Come ye blest'd."
For me the fruits of glory grow;
Or hell awaits my fall below.

Eternal God! what shall I do?
My nature trembles at the view;
My deathless soul herself surveys,
With joy and terror, and amaze.
Oh! be thy shield around me spread,
To guard the spirit thou hast made!
Save me from snares of earth and hell,
And from myself preserve me well;
Lest all the heav'nly truths I know
Should aggravate my guilt and woe!

Thy power in weakness is display'd;
If babes by thee be conqu'rors made,
If Satan's malice shall confound,
And heav'n with praises shall resound.

FINIS.