

PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN;

OR,

AN APPEAL TO PARENTS TO PRAY CONTINU-
ALLY FOR THE WELFARE AND SALVA-
TION OF THEIR CHILDREN.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM SCRIBNER.

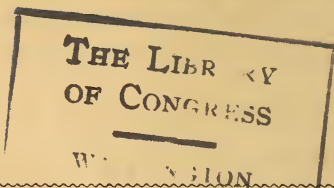
WITH A PREFATORY NOTE
BY THE
REV. L. H. ATWATER, D.D.



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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following appeal to Christian parents to abound in prayer for the regeneration, early piety and universal welfare of their children is plain, thorough and earnest. Its object is of incomparable moment. Although at first sight this duty might seem to be among those commonplaces in religion which are too obvious to need argument or enforcement, yet it is equally among those which, in part, from their very indisputableness, are liable to be forgotten or neglected. It is, moreover, beyond doubt that there has been a wide though often secret

skepticism in regard to the prospect or possibility of conversion and real religion in childhood and early youth which has often checked and prevented prayer and effort for this great blessing. We are glad to believe that this is less now than in the last generation. Great good has been done by timely discussion relative to the true import of infant baptism and the status and training it implies in the case of the children of the covenant. Many of Christ's lambs are now within his visible fold by open profession proceeding from hopeful conversion. We trust that the proportion of such will be vastly increased. Nothing can more contribute to this great result than a great increase of parental prayer for the regeneration of children, along with the efforts for the right training and nurture of these

children which such prayer will naturally inspire. We are confident that this unpretending volume will greatly further this precious cause.

L. H. ATWATER.

PRINCETON, Nov. 15, 1872.

1 *

PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

THE early conversion of all the children of the Church should be intensely desired and incessantly prayed for. How great are the advantages which would attend the *early* renewing of their minds!

It would shorten the period of their complete subjection to the dominion of sin. How can a holy soul, how can one in whom there are daily breathings after God, be satisfied to have his child continue for years in bondage to sin, even supposing a certainty may exist that conversion will take place before death? One would think that even that

joy which the Christian parent feels at beholding the return of the long-lost prodigal would be mingled with sadness at the thought of the years previously spent by him in the service of Satan and in enmity to God. Many who live to maturity before they pass from death unto life continue during the remainder of their days to suffer from the effects of evil habits to which they were addicted in the season of youth.

Moreover, unless those habits which none but a true Christian ever prizes—habits of daily and systematic prayer, resolute conflict with sin in its various forms, liberality, watchfulness over self and others of a similar kind—are formed in the morning of life, it is exceedingly doubtful whether they will ever become strong, even supposing the effort to form them be subsequently made.

As for the graces of the soul, as love, faith and humility, there is no possibility of their being exercised through a long series of years if conversion does not take place until late; consequently, any great attainments in holiness are not likely to be witnessed.

Although the saving conversion of the children of the Church is an object worthy of intense desire, yet it is a thing not often looked for. Professing Christians too frequently have little or no expectation that their offspring will experience the renewing influences of God's Spirit at a tender age. Nor is it often the case that members of the Church who are not parents expect to see the churches enlarged by the addition of converted children. Even ministers, while they may desire and pray for the divine blessing on their labors,

and may even be watching for it, seldom confidently look for the conversion of the little ones. Such a thing would fill them with joy, but they are not expecting it as a matter of course. There are persons, it may be, in the Christian congregation, who are thought to be not far from the kingdom of God, and who are daily expected to give evidence of having undergone a saving change, but they are not often children. Were a large number of these to come to Christ in the exercise of faith, within a short time, and express a desire to celebrate his dying love at the communion-table, God's people would be filled with surprise.

Yet all the means of grace have been bestowed upon the child which adults enjoy; the danger of staying away from the Saviour is frequently

set before him, and he easily comprehends it. He is assured that God delights to hear prayer, and will give the Holy Spirit to all who ask for it. He knows that God has said, They that seek me early shall find me, and he knows that our heavenly Father regards even a child's procrastination in the matter of repentance and coming to Christ as a great sin.

It may be said that Christians have learned not to expect things which God plainly shows by the workings of his providence he does not intend shall take place—that the fact itself that so few children of professors are actually renewed in childhood makes it evident that it is not in accordance with his will that they should be. It is a sufficient reply to this to say, that if the majority of professors were filled with

the deepest longings for the early conversion of their offspring, if they habitually wrestled with God in prayer for the blessing, if they faithfully and conscientiously imbued their minds with religious knowledge, if they continued to do all this unweariedly and with faith, and if, after all, scarcely any little children having such parents were brought into the fold of the good Shepherd, *then* it might afford evidence that God is unwilling that many should be renewed at an early age. But as the case stands no such conclusion can be drawn. All that we are entitled to infer is that God does not see fit to convert at a tender age the children of those whose desire for the blessing is very faint, and who do not earnestly seek it in the use of means which are adapted to bring it about.

That it is the will of God that the early regeneration of the children of the Church should take place, and should be desired and expected by us, is plain from the command of the Saviour, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Here is virtually a command that we desire their conversion while they are yet little children, that we expect it, and that we do all that in us lies to lead them to Jesus. He enjoins it upon us to look for and to strive to be instrumental in their early salvation, and he gives us to understand that our efforts shall not be in vain by adding that just such little ones are heirs and partakers of glory.

That it is the will of God is also manifest from the fact that he has, as was said, bestowed upon our children all the means of grace which adults enjoy. He has—and how can we be suffi-

ciently grateful for it?—rendered the truths which save the soul so simple that they may be comprehended by the youngest mind, and he has required us carefully to imbue their minds with those truths, on peril of his severe displeasure. He commands them to pray for themselves, and he requires the Church to pray for them. Surely when these things are properly looked at, we are driven to the conclusion that our heavenly Father is willing that our children should experience in their hearts, while they are yet young, the converting power of his grace.

The true explanation of the fact, that the early and manifest conversion of the children of the Church is not so frequent as to be looked for as almost a matter of course, is that parents devolve the work of laboring for their conver-

sion on others. Here is the sad mistake which many fathers and mothers make. They look to others to do the work which they themselves should perform. It is impossible for them to value too highly the faithful endeavors of ministers and Sabbath-school teachers to feed the lambs of Christ, but let them beware how they regard the labors of others, in the matter of their children's conversion, as a sufficient substitute for their own exertions to bring about that end. No Christian parent can be released from the obligation of striving by his own personal efforts to lead his children to Christ. He is not permitted to prefer the instrumentality of preaching to that of his own religious training of his little ones.

The command that we bring up our children in the nurture and admonition

of the Lord has but one meaning, and can be easily understood. As far as the children of believers are concerned, God designs that parental training should be the first and ordinary means of their salvation. They can no more be regenerated and saved without the use of means than can others, only in their case these means have a relation to the peculiar position which they occupy as children of the covenant.* There is a

* In the last excellent narrative (1872) of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, in regard to the state of religion within the bounds of that Church, occur the following words: "We are led to fear that the privileges of the Abrahamic covenant and the family obligations are too lightly esteemed among our people. Frequent mention is made of the Sabbath-school, but scarcely an utterance regarding home instructions. Is there not evidence in this that the true work and mission of the Sabbath-school is misapprehended? Or, at least, does it not suggest to us the probability that parents are neglecting the solemn obligation imposed upon them by divine author-

special promise to bless to their salvation the prayers, the godly example and the teaching of their parents, or of those who fill the place of parents to them. The Church has always recognized this truth, and in all ages of her history ity, and constituting a part of the covenant, in leaving the instruction of their households chiefly to the Sabbath-school teacher? The teacher may or may not be faithful in his work, but in any case he is not a party to the covenant made with God, and solemnly ratified by the ordinance of baptism, concerning the members of the family. The Abrahamic covenant, existing to-day, as during the infancy of Isaac, in all its blessedness and power, has its significance and must produce its results through the family relation. It was to Abraham and his seed that the promises were made; and, in like manner, through the whole history of the Church, the blessing to the household has been through the covenant with the parents. The privileges and the obligations of a covenant cannot be separated. Parents cannot come into the presence of God claiming that he shall bestow upon their children the blessings of the covenant when they themselves have wholly neglected to discharge the duties required of them by the very conditions of the covenant."

her best and wisest teachers have insisted that her children are to be made partakers of the benefits of Christ's redemption through the use of these means by their own parents. That holy and successful minister of Christ, Richard Baxter, expressed the opinion that the time would probably come when almost all the children within the pale of the Church would become pious under parental culture. He also says, "I doubt not to affirm that a godly education is God's first and ordinary appointed means for the begetting of actual faith and other graces. . . . And the preaching of the word by public ministers is not the first ordinary means of grace to any but those that were graceless till they came to hear such preaching. . . . The ordinary appointed means for the first actual grace is parents' godly in-

struction and education of their children.” *

The work to be done by parents in order to bring about the salvation and to secure the very highest good of their children includes—

1. Religiously instructing them.
2. Setting before them a holy example.
3. Restraining them.
4. Praying for them.

It is only concerning the last of these duties—that of praying for their children—that I propose to say a few words to Christian parents in what here follows.

I simply desire to offer you some persuasives to the faithful performance of this duty. The incentives which may well move you to intercede for them

* Quoted in Bushnell's "Christian Nurture."

earnestly and unceasingly are many and powerful. That which I would first urge you to make the matter of your perpetual supplication is their salvation. It is to be feared that very few faithfully pray for the salvation of their offspring, and it is certain that by many the duty is shockingly neglected.

PART I.

PRAYER FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S SALVATION.

I.

Pray for the salvation of your children, because their salvation is so great a prize that it is worth all the pains which your prayers to secure it for them may cost you.

When the unconcerned sinner is thoroughly aroused to a sense of his lost condition, he feels that to gain his own soul, at any sacrifice, is a work of infinite importance, and with the greatest earnestness he sets about using every means to save it which the word of God directs him to employ.

An English nobleman, who subsequently became an eminently useful Christian, thus describes his own case when his exposure to eternal death was first suddenly revealed to him : “It was at Brighton, 132 Marine-parade, about seven o’clock in the evening, that I received such a deep impression of eternity that the effect has continued to the present day, and by the blessing of God will remain to my dying day. I had just dressed for dinner, when the sight of the clothes which I had thrown off suddenly impressed me with the thought of dying, of undressing for the last time, of being unclothed of this body. I felt the terrors of dying unprepared in a degree approaching to reality. In the bed I saw, not a place of nightly repose, but a place intended to receive the dying struggle. In short, the pros-

pect of death was impressed on my imagination with overwhelming force, and not of death only, but of eternity, of the day of judgment, of an offended God and the sentence to eternal torment. I felt the imperative necessity of preparing for death at any cost and any sacrifice. The prospect of heaven added little or nothing to my resolution. Safety was all I aimed at. This I felt was within my reach, and I grasped at it with the feelings of a drowning man. Salvation must be sought and attained, though the path to it lay through fire and water. No hardship seemed worth a moment's consideration in comparison with so great a prize." *

Now, precisely the concern which we

* "Memoir of Lord Haddo," fifth edition, page 19, London.

feel about our own danger when we are at first truly awakened, we should feel with reference to the danger our children are in until we have good grounds for hoping that their souls are safe. We should feel that their salvation must be sought, though the path to it may lie through fire and water, for our children are a part of ourselves; and fearful as the thought is, it depends, in all probability, upon us, their parents, whether they are saved or not. We cannot throw off our responsibilities for them. Do you feel that the eternal ruin of your children is a possible thing—that it is most probable if you never pray for them? The fact that their souls are precious beyond all thought, that the loss of their souls would be inconceivably dreadful, that eternal life would be to them an infinite

gain, and that your prayers may be instrumental in saving them, should stir you up to the offering of incessant supplications in their behalf. Surely you must be convinced that their salvation from eternal death is worth all your prayers and tears—all the agonizing earnestness which may accompany your intercessions for them.

This is true if the declarations of the God of truth are to be believed. Had not the soul's salvation been precious beyond all conception, he would not, in order to secure it, have delivered up his own Son. Your children have just such souls as the blessed Saviour came to redeem. Pity for them indeed glowed in his heart when he gave himself to die. If you are convinced that their souls' redemption has a value beyond all price, can you shrink from the

burden—if you regard it such—which importunate prayer for them would impose on you?

II.

Pray for the salvation of your children, because few will pray for it if you do not.

There is reason to fear that comparatively few professing Christians intercede for souls whom they have not some very special reasons for being interested in. This is lamentable, for the world will never be converted to Christ until his people pray more for their fellow-men. Indeed, almost all the supplications offered by Christians should be intercessory. “To pray always,” says an earnest and eloquent writer, “is a hard precept, and one we can only come to by time and habit, as well

as by gift and grace. But the thing is to find that the older we grow, the more we pray, and the more we pray, the more our prayer takes the line of intercession for the souls of others.

“The inestimable privilege of prayer is given us not merely for our own necessities, but that we may use it for the temporal and spiritual good of others.”

God expressly commands us to make intercessory prayer. I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men.* This command is too often forgotten. As for singling out souls in order to make them the subjects of prayer, very little of this is done, and those who are thus singled out are generally persons thought to be of importance in the

* 1 Tim. ii. 1.

Church or in the world. Your children will probably, therefore, be passed by in those intercessions in which highly favored ones are particularly remembered by God's praying people.

Oh, then, seeing that few, if any, in the Church of Christ will be faithful to them in this respect, let them have the benefit of your own perpetual supplications. Plead with the Saviour to give them his Holy Spirit. Come to God for this blessing with holy boldness, with earnest wrestlings, with arguments and tears. Say not that you truly love them if you find it too much trouble thus to entreat for them the blessings which their souls imperatively need.

III.

Pray for the salvation of your children, because none others can pray for it as you can.

We may desire an interest in the prayers of a stranger, but we covet still more the intercessions of one who loves us, and who thoroughly understands our character and wants. We know that such a one is able to pray for us as no stranger can. In like manner, your great love for your children, the tender pity you feel for them and your knowledge of their disposition, wants and trials qualify you to plead with God in their behalf with an importunity and an earnestness which can take no denial.

Even ungodly fathers and mothers cannot but long to have their offspring saved—even such cannot bear the idea

of their being for ever lost. But what words can at all express the profound anxieties of pious parents for their children? "If we turn our eye to her who is pre-eminently the parent—if one can earn the title by intensity of pain and love—the mother has a tenderness toward her offspring which she has long since concluded to bury in silence or utter only in prayers, since she well knows no language of hers can ever express it."

It was as a parent that Jacob prayed when he wrestled with the angel. No doubt, as he continued to weep and to make supplications, he found great enlargement in prayer. No doubt he thought of the oft-repeated promises to Abraham, to Isaac and to himself, and prayed for the coming of Him in whom all nations should be blessed, who should

reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of whose kingdom there should be no end. But that which impelled him to begin to pray was his fatherly anxiety. It was the perilous condition which his children were in, which first drove him to the mercy-seat, with the strong resolve that he would not be denied. God knows the tender and anxious love of a parent, and therefore he has promised his people that if they will be faithful as parents he will convert and save their children for ever. Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.* When he would convince us of his willingness to hear prayer, he has

* Deut. vii. 9.

framed an argument founded on this parental love. That argument is that, if our heavenly Father is more willing to bless us than parents are to give gifts to their children, he must be willing indeed. Repeated acts of prayer become in time a habit of prayer, and rest assured that none can so easily acquire the habit of interceding for your children as you can.

IV.

Pray for the salvation of your children, because your omitting to do so will be perilous to them and to you.

It should not be forgotten that our heavenly Father makes a distinction between those who try to fulfill their parental obligations and those parents who are altogether unfaithful. You must use the means which he has ap-

pointed to prevent the ruin and to secure the salvation of your little ones, and not one of these exceeds in importance the offering up of prayer daily in their behalf. If you fail in this, they remain in fearful peril.

The danger to yourselves also is great, for by your wicked omission you incur the displeasure of God. He is not an indifferent spectator of your neglect. It is not to unfaithful, prayerless parents that his exceeding great and precious promises are addressed, but "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."*

It is a dreadful thought that multi-

* Ps. ciii. 17, 18.

tudes of souls have perished who would have been saved had their parents faithfully prayed for them. Such parents have gone into eternity with the blood of their children on their skirts. The great want of your children is faith; without faith they cannot be saved. But you have no right to expect that God will bestow this gift upon them if you do not seek it for them. By a life of impenitence and unbelief they may do dreadful and lasting injury, and such a life they will be likely to live, should they continue in the world, unless you pray for them. They are surrounded by evil influences and they are fallen creatures, and they need to be protected from these evil influences by the power of God, and no less do they need to be inwardly restrained, enlightened, controlled, purified and guided by

the Holy Spirit. These wants are very great and pressing. Therefore ask God earnestly and importunately to supply them.

V.

Pray for the salvation of your children, because you will then find it easier to perform other parental duties on the performance of which God has conditioned their salvation.

The Bible clearly makes known what those duties are which God requires of parents. They are required to teach their children diligently the truths of his word, and to accompany and enforce this instruction by wholesome restraint and the light of a holy example.

They cannot commit this work to others. It is the parent himself who is commanded to bring up his own children in the nurture and admonition of

the Lord.* God commends Abraham for fulfilling himself his own parental duties. "And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment."†

When God says to parents, "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,"‡ how

* Eph. vi. 4.

† Gen. xvii. 17, 18.

‡ Deut. vi. 6, 7

plain it is that he expects parents to be the instructors of their own children !

And why should they not be ? What more natural than that Christian fathers and mothers should themselves undertake the work instead of depending on others to do it for them ? How much greater is the advantage which a parent possesses than any other person can have in his constant intercourse with his child and his hold on its confidence and love !

This work of training up your own children in the nurture of the Lord has been given *to you* by God. It is a great work, and nothing can sustain you under the burden like the offering up of prayer for your little ones, believingly, earnestly and perseveringly. Pray, then, for them—pray for them early and late and without ceasing. God will an-

swer your supplications by inclining you by his grace to use his appointed means for promoting their spiritual good, and by wonderfully assisting you to employ those means. Moreover, it will be seen, should their lives be spared, that the labor expended in their faithful training has not been in vain. Some who are to be commended for their persevering efforts to impart religious instruction to their children, and for the mingled kindness and firmness with which they control them, neglect too much to pray for them. No doubt this is the reason why many children, who have been carefully taught and governed, disappoint parental hopes. Too little prayer, especially believing prayer, was offered for them. We may not be able to tell why it is so, but it

is nevertheless a fact, that some blessings seldom come except in answer to importunate prayer. One of these is the early conversion of our children.

VI.

Pray for the renewing of the souls of your children, because prayer alone can call into exercise that divine power in their behalf, which is absolutely necessary in order that the means which you may employ for their salvation may not be used in vain.

That a radical change must be wrought in their souls, that they must be quickened or raised to life, born again, created anew, you feelingly acknowledge, because you believe that their natural state is a state of spiritual death. But what is to effect the great change which is so indispensable? What is it

which can make them new creatures and impart to their souls a divine spiritual life? Not Christian nurture, which is to be faithfully used as a means and the neglect of which might be ruinous, but the mighty power of God, and that alone. Only the exceeding greatness of God's power which raised Christ from the dead can quicken their souls and cause them to live the spiritual life.

But regeneration is not the whole of religion. The principle of spiritual life, when newly implanted in them, is but feeble. Only as it is fed by the truth can it be maintained and strengthened. Our Saviour prays, Sanctify them by thy truth. But although the knowledge of the truth and constant progress in that knowledge are necessary in order to sanctification, yet sanctifica-

tion is still to be recognized as the work of God's Spirit. The Spirit does indeed use the word as his instrument in producing holiness of heart and life, still, it is by his agency, from first to last, that any believer grows in grace.

Thus does your absolute dependence and that of your child on the influences of the omnipotent Spirit appear. Thus plain it is that, however long and earnestly you may persevere in using means (which, indeed, must not be neglected) for the saving conversion of your offspring, yet all will be in vain unless the third person of the Godhead works in them to will and to do. The total spiritual death of the soul renders the mere use of means utterly powerless, and nothing short of the putting forth of the same almighty power which wrought in Christ can raise it to

life—can make it the possessor of a spark of holiness.

Seeing that this is so, how sincere and profound should be your gratitude to God that he has pointed out a way by which you may secure the exertion of this divine power in their behalf! He has taught you that prayer for the efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit on their hearts will certainly be heard. Thousands of believing parents have tested this gracious promise with success. Their prayers have had power with God, and have prevailed, and yours will also prevail if you intercede with faith, if you pray always and do not faint. How wonderful that prayer should have efficacy to secure the almighty energy of the blessed Spirit for our children's good! It is owing to the infinite condescension of our God.

Let us show how exceedingly we prize God's condescending love by continually seeking the great blessing which he encourages us to seek; and if any have children who have long been wanderers from the fold, let them persevere in praying for them to the very last, for it is impossible for them to be so hardened that God cannot change their hearts with infinite ease. And nothing but believing prayer can secure the exertion of his power to effect the change.

VII.

Pray for the salvation of your children, because by their salvation, granted in answer to your prayers, the divine Saviour will be glorified.

Jesus is the great deliverer. He is the deliverer of his people from eternal

misery, and he is the author of their eternal blessedness. It was his love for them which constrained him to die for their salvation. When any are actually saved—saved in spite of the fearful difficulties in the way and the opposition of Satan and all his hosts—his design in dying is so far accomplished.

Thus, whenever a sinner is saved, Jesus is victorious—he is glorified, a new star is added to his crown. Besides, each soul snatched from the grasp of Satan and eternal ruin sings his praises. “New redeemed criminals from earth, saved from the gates of hell, enter the gates of heaven with a new song of praise in their mouths, and add to the ever-growing melody of which they shall never weary.” They never rest day nor night, giving praise and glory to

Him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb at his right hand.

Should your children, in answer to your prayers, be added to the number of the redeemed, you see how their redemption will exceedingly glorify the Saviour. This motive should be stronger than any other which can influence you to seek their salvation. The salvation of men should never be thought of apart from the glory of Christ. His exaltation is the highest end contemplated in the work of redemption. Your love for him should be stronger by far than any other passion of your soul. Not merely the salvation of your beloved children, *but the glory of the blessed Saviour* in their salvation, should impel you to pray for them. Nothing that can happen in the world is worthy of notice, except in so

far as it has a bearing on the promotion of the glory of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps our prayers and labors for the conversion of our near relatives would more frequently be blessed to their salvation were we, in the efforts which we put forth, more influenced by the desire that our blessed Redeemer should be glorified.

VIII.

Pray for the salvation of your children, because you have a strong encouragement and incentive to do so in the express promise of God that, if you are faithful to your trust, he will be their God, and will save them.

The words which God spake to Abraham, when he entered into covenant with him and his seed, may be regarded as addressed to each believer individually, and therefore to you. Why do

you expect to be heard when you ask that you yourself may, during your life and at your death, receive benefits from Christ? Is it because God has promised you that he will be your God? That his love for you shall never fail? That he will never leave you nor forsake you? That his Spirit which is upon you, and his words which he has put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth? That he will circumcise your heart to love the Lord your God that you may live? Then you may just as much expect to be heard and answered when you plead for your children, for these promises of the covenant are not one whit less intended for them than for you. Indeed, they expressly mention your children, as will be seen when they are read as they stand in the word of God: "As for

me this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed.* The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart *and the heart of thy seed* to love the Lord thy God that thou mayest live.†

The covenant between God and each parent dates from the very moment when the latter, with penitence and faith, accepts the proffered salvation. It at once embraces his children, who now have its seal attached to them, and are to be watched over and cherished, as belonging to God and as entitled to all the benefits of membership in his Church. It would involve a contradic-

* Isa. lix. 31.

† Deut. xxx. 6.

tion to deny that the offspring of Christian parents are members of the visible Church, while admitting that they are introduced into the covenant into which their parents enter with God, and have a special interest in its promise. This promise holds out to faithful parents the expectation that their little ones will be renewed and savingly united to Christ at a tender age.

To lead them to look for this is undoubtedly what the promise of the covenant was intended to do. When they remember, in their supplications for the salvation of their children, to plead this promise, this is the precise thing which they are regarded by their kind and gracious God as petitioning for in behalf of their offspring—viz., that they may be the subjects of the regenerating

work of the Holy Spirit in the very beginning of life.

If, however, parental solicitude longs for clearer evidence than it sees of the existence of grace, the anxious mother would be guilty of no presumption should she fully believe that, in consequence of the divinely-established connection between the faith of parents and the salvation of their offspring, her faith will bring upon her children the blessing of the covenant. "The evidences, the fruits and manifestations of the Spirit's work in the infantile and childish mind, subject as that mind is to the restraints and training and religious habits of a godly home, may be—must be in many cases—difficult to detect before their riper years and larger experience of sin and temptation and the world; but the assumption of al-

most all the Churches of the Protestant world, based upon clear Bible revelations, is that the children of believers are regenerated and savingly united to Christ until the contrary is established in their subsequent life, and it is expected that at an early age they will be admitted to the Lord's table. The agency of the Spirit, according to the promise, is taken for granted, and the children of the Church are to be looked upon and trained and treated as united to Christ, till they themselves disprove it by their own willful rejection of the covenant in which they were born, baptized and blessed. This, we say, is the underlying assumption of most, if not all, the Churches of the Protestant world." *

* See an admirable tract, entitled "The Early Regeneration of Sabbath-school Children," by the Rev. T. H.

In view, then, of the relation which your children sustain to God and the

Skinner, D.D., from which the above is quoted. Published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

Presbyterians are not taught by the constitution of their Church that the children of professing Christians are first received into the Church when they become communicants. The "Directory for Worship" teaches just the opposite. Its language is, "Children born within the pale of the visible Church," etc. The children of believers are in the visible Church by right of birth. When those whose parents are professing Christians are about to sit down to the Lord's table for the first time, a form of declaration and welcome is sometimes read to them by the pastor in the presence of the congregation. But it is not necessary that any such form should be used, and many pastors prefer simply to announce the fact that the session have admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper such and such baptized persons. But when any form is adopted, and is read by the pastor in the presence of the congregation, it should make the truth emphatically prominent that the baptized ones about to become communicants have, from their birth, been members of the visible Church, and that the session, in deciding that they possessed the requisite qualifications for partaking of the Lord's Supper, did not receive them into the Church as if they

covenant—in view of the fact that because they are your children the grace which is promised to you is likewise promised to them—you are authorized to claim as much for them as for your own soul, you may just as much expect to be heard when you plead for their salvation as when you pray for your own.

Whatever our gracious God has really promised he will do. His promises bind him. This is one reason why you have power with God when you pray for the salvation of your offspring. Another thing which gives

were the children of unbelievers. A formal public profession of faith before partaking of sealing ordinances is only required by our Directory for Worship of unbaptized persons. Its language is, "When unbaptized persons apply for admission into the Church, they shall, in ordinary cases, after giving satisfaction with respect to their knowledge and piety, make a public profession of their faith in the presence of the congregation, and thereupon be baptized."—*Directory, Chap. IX.*

you power with him when you pray is his infinite love for you. We do not deserve to be the objects of his love, but it nevertheless remains true that God's love for his people influences him to show kindness to them, and to answer their petitions. It is the nature of love to have a constraining power over him who is the subject of it. It constrains the person loving to be kind to the one who is beloved, to minister to his necessities and to grant his reasonable requests. Indeed, we know that our Saviour would never have died for his people had not his infinite love for them constrained him to do so. Because, therefore, God loves his own people with a love which passes knowledge, they cannot importunately plead for such a thing as the salvation of their children without having power with

him, and prevailing. In addition to this, his love for them causes him to have a tenderness for their children. They also are beloved by him and are dear to him for their parents' sakes.

IX.

An instance of God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promise to hear the prayers of parents for the salvation of their children.

Multitudes of examples are on record which show how faithful God is to the covenant he has graciously entered into with his own people. We desire, before leaving this part of the subject, to present a touching instance of this kind, with all the particulars, of which we are well acquainted. The Holy Spirit's work can easily be discerned by all who read the narration.

The beloved child of whom we speak was a consistent communicant long before his death, but the evidence which he furnished in his dying hours of having undergone a gracious change was more striking than any he had before given. No child was ever more importunately prayed for, and in the dealings of God with his soul in his last hours his afflicted parents deeply felt that their many prayers in his behalf were abundantly answered. The exhibition of genuine religious feeling by dying believers, especially if such believers are young, has a power in it altogether peculiar—a fact which would of itself render the little narrative, never before published, worthy of preservation. We extract it from a letter written to the absent parents by a beloved relative of Willy who watched over his

sick-bed and constantly ministered to him until he breathed his last.

“With deep sorrow, tempered with joy, I write to you this morning—with sorrow, because your dear boy William has gone from us nevermore to return; with joy, because his going from us was so peaceful and full of Christian comfort.

“Dear Willy was not willing to have you written to—though the doctor said it would be well—for fear of alarming you more than was necessary. All day Monday I watched him closely, and he had as comfortable a day as we could expect, for it was one of the hottest days of the season. Through the day he was hopeful, full of fun and patient as a lamb, being grateful for every little attention and so very considerate of my labor as almost to grieve me. But

Monday night was worse than the day, and in spite of all we could do our poor boy felt it in its severity, passing it in restless tossing. His uncle sat with him the first part of the night, and I the latter part.

“Tuesday morning showed a great change to the doctor, though not to our eyes, and Willy read it in his face, and asked me, ‘Aunt, what does the doctor say exactly?’ I answered, ‘Willy, he says you are in a critical condition.’ Said he, ‘That means that he thinks I will not live, does it not?’

“All this was with scarcely any excitement, a little flush of the face, but no tremor of the voice. I replied, ‘I think it means that you are in danger, yet he is not at all hopeless; but this is no more than you have known all the time. Is it not so, Willy?’

“He said, ‘I know, aunt, you have told me all the while there was danger, but I have not really thought I should die, and now, if it be God’s will that I should live, I would like to, and shall; but if he wills otherwise, it is all for the best, for I know in whom I have trusted in health, and I know my Saviour will sustain me in death. But my poor father; it will be a great blow to him to lose me, though he knows where to go for comfort and strength. I would love to see father and mother and the dear children. Aunt, the evil one has once or twice since I’ve been sick tried to tempt me to doubt my acceptance with God, but I dare not do it, for God has promised, and I dare not doubt his word. He has promised that he will accept all who put their trust in him; this I have done,

and do still. I will not doubt. I know I am bought with a price—that is all-sufficient. What should I do now, if I had not made my peace with God while in health? I could not do it now; for although not suffering from pain, I am too weak.’

“He asked me to read the fourteenth chapter of John, which I did, and it seemed comforting to him. He said, ‘’Tis a fearful thing to be told you must die, but the blessed Saviour smooths all the terror away. Why have I not worked more earnestly for my Saviour while I had health? I did know the way, but have not walked as steadfastly in that way as I now wish I had. All I have to regret is that I have not done more for Jesus, but I hope my death may be the means of doing the good I failed to accom-

plish in life. I have no ill-will toward any, and freely and fully forgive all who have in any way injured me.'

"The doctor came in and told him he would call a consulting physician if he wished, and Willy said, 'Just as you please.' The doctor then talked with him, Willy questioning him. I did not stay in the room, but just as I came back, he asked the doctor to pray with him. This he did, and it was a great comfort to him, for he alluded to it several times during the day, as such a comfort to have such a physician. After consultation the physicians told him he was very ill, yet they were far from hopeless; but much depended on his constitution; that he must rest as much as possible and keep up good courage.

"He said, 'I would like to talk to

each of the family.' He did so, calling for them as he wished, talking earnestly but calmly to each. He then wished to be left quite alone, and he prayed audibly; but much as we wished to listen to that prayer, we did not, and Willy was alone with his God.

“He called me back and said to me, ‘Aunt, this has not been a shock to my spiritual nature, but it has to my nervous system. I am almost over that now.’ And indeed he was correct there, for he was the most calm of the family. There seemed almost a halo about his head—such peace and holy joy as I never saw but once before. As he wished to see the Rev. Mr. D., we sent for him and he came immediately and had a long interview with him. I know it was a great comfort to dear Willy, as

he said so several times during the day, coupling him with his 'good doctor.'

"All through the day he was quiet, taking short naps, frequently saying to himself, 'Blessed Jesus; precious Saviour,' or quoting some passage of Scripture, and then falling right to sleep again. Several times he said to me, 'My Saviour's arm is a strong one to lean upon; it is underneath me and round about me, sustaining and supporting me. It is a soft pillow for my head. Oh what a comfort to my soul! So the day passed in holy quiet. I felt all day that I was on holy ground, getting glimpses of the other world, and I do believe that Willy's communion with God was more close than mortal could enjoy and live. Oh how I did long for you and his father to be present that you might have the com-

fort of that day, for tell as we may, we never can impart to you that calm resting on the Lord. It was all on the Lord, for he said, 'My trust is alone in Jesus. I am not good. Jesus is all goodness; in his merits alone I trust.'

"During the night of Tuesday he was for a few hours delirious, but Wednesday morning at five o'clock he was perfectly rational, and he remained so until his spirit left us at eight o'clock. Though he could only answer us in monosyllables, he knew us till the very last. I repeated many passages of Scripture that he had seemed to select the day before, and he would say—it was all he could utter—'Yes, yes.'

"I asked him, not long before his spirit left the body, 'Is the Saviour still near and sustaining you?' 'Yes.' 'Is he still precious?' 'Yes.' 'Can

you, now that you are actually passing through the dark valley and shadow of death, say truly, I will fear no evil, for thy rod and thy staff they comfort me?' Promptly he answered, 'Yes, yes.' I feel that I never stood nearer to God than during that day, and much as I would love to say to comfort you, I feel that his own words will do far more than any I could frame.

"When Willy found he must die, he felt that he would like to die at home, though in the next breath he said, 'Tis just as well, and better, as it is, for God so wills it.' He had been with us but a few days, but it was long enough for us to love him dearly, and we longed to know him better; but we thank God that he gave us this short acquaintance with one who seemed so near to him. His message to all was,

‘Work now for the Master while you have life and health.’ This was his message to his brothers and sisters and all his young friends.”

Have you, Christian parent, children still living whose godly lives furnish evidence which satisfies you that your many prayers for them are being answered? Then you can never be sufficiently thankful for the favor you have received. Indeed, you cannot even comprehend the greatness of the blessing bestowed upon you. Yet your work for those thus spared to you, is not all accomplished. Continue to be faithful to the children who are with you, while you account as yours still those who have gone before you into heaven.

PART II.

THUS FAR WE HAVE LIMITED OURSELVES TO REMARKS ON PRAYER FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S SALVATION. SUPPLICATING DIRECTLY FOR THEIR SALVATION, HOWEVER, IS NOT YOUR WHOLE DUTY. THERE ARE MANY THINGS BESIDES THIS CROWNING BLESSING WITH REFERENCE TO WHICH YOU SHOULD EARNESTLY PRAY, IN ORDER THAT THEIR HIGHEST GOOD MAY BE SECURED.

I.

Pray for your children, because you may then expect, as the result of your prayers, that the power of God will counteract in some measure the evil you have done them.

Even the best of parents sometimes do their children harm, and many positively injure the young whom God has committed to their culture and

discipline, by defects of government. "We have seen the good influence of many a pious father frustrated by a sternness and severity, a harshness and austerity, a frowning and unsympathizing distance, which, if it commanded a reluctant eye-service, commanded nothing better, and repelled the affections of his children not only from him, but, we fear, from the religion which he thus impersonated before them." You are warned against provoking your children to wrath. To administer poison to them would not be inflicting on them such harm as to nurture evil in their hearts by severity, partiality or injustice.

On the other hand, you may exceedingly injure, if not ruin, your child by a misguided tenderness and lack of conscientious authority.

Now, fervent and unceasing prayer for your offspring would have a powerful influence in enabling you to avoid sins of government. It would be sure to be accompanied by faithfulness in every duty pertaining to your management and control of them. Thoughtful love for them, and an earnest desire for their real good, would take the place of mere fondness, and you would be led to avoid the extremes of harshness and of hurtful indulgence.

Even though you may not be chargeable with lamentable failure in the training of your family, yet, by the unalterable law of the transmission of parental character, you are ever working your own character into the "spiritual texture of the souls of your children," so that their susceptible minds and hearts are, in some degree at least,

influenced for evil by your imperfections. If the appalling truth that your influence over your offspring is in some measure determined and proportioned by your true inward character alarms and distresses you, there is one thought which is capable of affording you comfort. That thought is that your earnest pleadings with God, with whom all things are possible, may be instrumental in counteracting the injury you have inflicted on those so dear to you. The Spirit of God will not only quicken to a joyous harvest the good seed sown in faithfulness and tears, but will prevent the bad seed from becoming deeply rooted.

II.

Pray for your children, because there will be critical periods in their lives when without your incessant prayers, offered with reference to such times, they may be left to act most unwisely if not ruinously.

As soon as they begin to choose and act for themselves in regard to the pursuits and transactions of life, they will not unfrequently be placed in circumstances in which the evil consequences, to themselves and those to whom they are dear, of their decisions and acts, will be terrible, unless in those decisions and acts they are divinely guided and blessed.

That is a very important period in the history of the young when they are called to select their own employ-

ments for life. Be much engaged in prayer that they may be divinely led to engage in those pursuits and occupations in which they can best glorify God and do the most good to their fellow-men. Who can describe the suffering often caused by the sad mistake which a young man makes when he chooses a different business or profession from the one for which he is most fitted ? How greatly blessed are they who, in answer to prayer offered by themselves and those who love them, have been led to devote their energies to that lifework which God intended should be theirs ! He may not intend that your children shall do great works and fill important places ; nevertheless, you need not doubt that he has some work or sphere for them into which they may be guided.

“God has a definite life-plan for every human person, girding him visibly or invisibly for some exact thing, which it will be the true significance and glory of life to have accomplished.” But it is possible to take another place, and attempt another work, than those appointed. You can have no certainty that your children can escape such an evil if you do not pray often that they may be directed.

The time may be distant when they will be of suitable age to enter into the marriage relation ; nevertheless, as you may be removed from them by death, with reference to so momentous a matter you should not neglect to pray. How evil and bitter, in thousands of instances, have been the consequences of entering into this relation without the blessing of God ! and when the children of

Christian parents make an unwise choice and contract unhappy marriages, it is a sure sign that such parents failed to begin early to make this most important matter a subject of earnest supplication.

That we should lay up prayers with reference to the future critical turns in the lives of our children will be evident when we consider that “their appointments and stations—yea, even their present and eternal happiness or misery, so far as these are influenced by their states and conditions in life—may be decided by the most minute and trivial events, all of which are in God’s hand, and not in ours.” *

* Cecil.

III.

Pray for your children, because it will lead you to a better understanding of them.

Fervent prayer incessantly offered for them, in which their special wants, as far as you know them, are spread before God, will be sure to lead to greater watchfulness over them, to a closer study of their character and to a still more exact knowledge of their dispositions and wants.

This intimate acquaintance with the character and needs of each of his children, on the part of the parent, is of the utmost importance. He should not only know the characteristics which ever belong to childhood, but he should be familiar with the distinctive qualities, the peculiar temperaments and

the trials of his own little ones. He should understand the motives which most easily influence them, and what temptations are most likely to lead them into wrong-doing. He should make himself familiar with their sorrows. He should know whether they are gentle, sensitive, keenly alive to sympathy, to ridicule, or the reverse; whether, owing to his own mismanagement, they may not lack confidence in his love for them and desire for their happiness. Men constantly misjudge each other, and parents sometimes entirely fail to understand their children, and make sad mistakes as to the motives which actuate them. But if a thorough knowledge of your children is necessary, in order that you may be a good parent, you cannot fail, as already said, to gain that knowledge, if you

faithfully intercede for them. You will be compelled to study their character and needs in order to intercede for them intelligently.

IV.

Pray for your children, because it will increase your holy desires with reference to them.

It was said that our children may lack confidence in our affection for them. But, more than this, they may fail to see that we desire above all things their spiritual good. Perhaps the faintness of your desires for the spiritual welfare of your offspring often humbles and grieves you, but nothing would so increase your holy longings for it as prayer continually offered in their behalf. When we give utterance, while engaged in communing with God,

to those desires which he himself has implanted in our hearts, we use the very means which, above all others, will increase their strength. If we cannot pray, even for strangers, without learning to love them, surely the more we commend our children to God, the stronger will our love for their souls become. Besides, in the act of pleading with our heavenly Father to bestow spiritual benefits upon them, we are obliged to contemplate those benefits distinctly. This will greatly increase their value in our eyes. The more we think of them, the more precious will they appear to us, and thus will the desire be intensified that our children may be enriched by them.

This steady increase of holy desires in your heart, with reference to your children, will prove an unspeakable

blessing both to them and to you. It will shed a heavenly influence on your soul continually. It will react on your prayers for them, making those prayers still more sincere and fervent, and therefore more influential with Him who is the hearer of prayer. It will cause you to covet more and more for your children—and above every earthly good—the kingdom of God and his righteousness. It will strengthen all your Christian graces and make you holier in each of the relations you sustain in life.

V.

Pray for your children, because no other means will be so effectual in enabling you to overcome the difficulty you experience in talking with them on religious subjects.

Perhaps you often desire, and even resolve, to obey the injunction, "Thou shalt talk of these words to thy children when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," but still you are silent. The free conversation is still postponed. The indescribable reluctance which you feel in talking with them about their souls' concerns is not overcome.

You are not altogether insensible, it may be, to the loss which they are sustaining through your neglect, for you have sometimes witnessed the deep impression made by religious truth on their tender minds; and yet, day after day, you suffer the golden opportunities which belong to the age of childhood to go unimproved. Nothing is so adapted to remove this reserve as earnest, per-

sistent prayer, in which your child's every want is spread before God and specific requests are offered in its behalf. Pray thus, and the effect in opening your mouth will be sure to follow. Out of the abundance of your heart your mouth will speak. Your own reserve being overcome, the shyness of your children will disappear. How touching and instructive is the account of the interchange of thought between Leigh Richmond and his son Wilberforce, when the religious experience of the latter first became the subject of conversation between father and child!

"All reserve," writes the sister of Wilberforce, who gives the account, "was now banished from my brother's mind.* He opened his whole heart to

* Leigh Richmond's "Domestic Portraiture."

his father, told him minutely of all his past conflicts, spoke of his present comforts and begged that he might be closely examined. He wished to satisfy his parent that his faith was scriptural and sincere. He seemed to go beyond his strength in conversing, even to extreme exhaustion, and appeared very anxious to tell how God had enlightened, converted, strengthened and comforted him. He would sit for hours with his dear father in the study, supported in an easy-chair, telling him all he had gone through, entreating his pardon for the uneasiness he had occasioned him by his past silence, and expressing his great joy at now being able to converse with freedom and mingle their souls together in the delightful interchange of confidence. It was now that our beloved father was indeed

comforted, and that he received a full answer to patient prayer."

Leigh Richmond himself writes in regard to the joyful deliverance of both from this reserve, "My prayers are answered at last; the door of utterance is opened, and I am truly thankful. All the nameless pangs of my mind during the last eight months have been almost blotted out of my remembrance by my present consolations."

The removal of the difficulties in the way of free conversation with your children should be an object of earnest desire, and that desire should be accompanied with fervent prayer.

VI.

Pray for your children, because you will thus secure for them divine aid in the efforts they may make to yield you their obedience.

God requires of children submission to the parent's will, and implicit obedience, and all men regard the requirement as a benevolent one. It should be the desire, as it is the plain duty, of fathers and mothers to assist their children to render obedience, but they fail to afford them this assistance when they neglect to exercise the authority with which God has clothed them. This is the reason why such omission is cruelty to the young. Unaided self-government is a task to which they are unequal. Authoritative control may be regarded as an aid afforded to the

feeble resolution of the child, for his inclinations will overpower his sense of right and his good intentions. When conscience begins to reprove, a feeling of compunction and mortification renders him unhappy. Could he now settle down upon an authoritative injunction, the perplexing difficulty would be dismissed from his mind.

The immature judgments of children are insufficient to hold in check their ardent and impetuous desires. Hence they are often hurried into mischief without a moment's reflection on the unhappy consequences; and when the excitement has subsided, and the season of calm reflection returns—as it always will—the thought of the misdeeds actually committed awakens compunction and remorse. The sadness and self-accusations so surely consequent

upon their commission appeal strongly to parental sympathy, and should secure the prompt exercise of authority in wholesome restraint.*

But children need more than mere human assistance, even though that assistance may come from wise and affectionate parents. They can no more perform their filial duties without help from God than you, without such help, can perform your parental duties. You pray, it may be, for supplies of grace, and you rely on such divine influence to enable you to act well your part as a parent, but do you not strangely forget that your child is equally dependent on the Holy Spirit's power, and that without it he can

* See an admirable treatise on family government by Rev. W. H. Bulkely. Published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

have no strength to fulfill the duties which grow out of the relations he sustains to you? You are solemnly bound to think of the dependence of your children on God's help, and earnestly to pray that that help may be afforded them in their endeavors to honor and obey you.

VII.

Pray for your children, because other parents, seeing your example, may be led to imitate you.

Pray much for your children, and you will be sure to set a high value on prayer offered by parents for their offspring. You will have faith in it as a means which all may use for obtaining good things for their little ones, and for securing their preservation from every real evil. Your appreciation of the value of parental prayer will rather in-

crease than become weaker. In all your utterances of your deep convictions on the subject you will speak with energy. Your words will be spirit-stirring, and will have power to move other parents. Others will be more or less stimulated by your faithfulness, and to some you may be made an unspeakable blessing in the way of inciting them to the more zealous performance of their parental duties.

They who are familiar with the life of Philip Henry know that he was a constant intercessor for his children at the throne of grace, and his example is highly admonitory to most parents. His biographer says, "When his children were removed from him, he was a daily intercessor at the throne of grace for them and their families. The burnt-offerings were still offered accord-

ing to the number of them all. He used to say, 'Surely, the children of so many prayers will not come to harm.' Their particular circumstances of affliction and danger were sure to be mentioned by him with suitable petitions." And his daily prayers for them were wonderfully answered. Probably there never was a family in which grace more remarkably reigned. It is said of the children of Robert Hall that a deep impression was often made upon their minds by their hearing him as they passed his study door commending them by name with the utmost fervency to God, and entreating those blessings for each which in his judgment each most needed.

VIII.

Pray for your children, because they will often, should they continue in the world, have their times of need when the power of God alone can avail to help them.

Disappointments, sickness, losses, cares, in short, adversity in various forms, will be sure to overtake them soon or late, and well will it be for them if you have anticipated these times of need by innumerable prayers offered in their behalf.

There will be times of temptation when their souls will be in fearful peril. Is it possible that you have no anxious moments when you think of the temptations which will certainly beset them, and to which inbred corruption will give such force—the allurements

of the world and, above all, the snares of the evil one? The spirits of darkness will assuredly do all in their power to hurt them, and if possible will accomplish their ruin. We are ever surrounded by fallen spirits. Dream not that any soul is so favored as to escape their watchful efforts to destroy it. They never depart from any of us for a long season, and as fast as one plot to injure us fails they contrive another. We have no earthly friend who can protect us from their machinations, and you well know that you have no power to defeat their plans and contrivances to bring injury on your children. But your blessed Saviour is abundantly able to protect them, for all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. They need no better protection than he is able to af-

ford them, and he will hear your prayers for them. Fail not, therefore, to entreat him to defend them from the malice, power and wiles of evil spirits, the agents of Satan, who are constantly around them.

In all the perils which may beset your children, in all their times of need, their souls will be safe if they have the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and therefore let your supplications constantly ascend that they may never be forsaken by the Spirit, but may daily be the subjects of his restraining, enlightening and sanctifying power. He would be their greatest benefactor who would succeed in leading you, their parent, habitually to seek for them the influences of the Holy Spirit.

Are they still the slaves of sin,

strangers to the new birth and unfit to die? Pray that God will give them his Holy Spirit, and you pray for their quickening by almighty power, for the restoration of the lost image of God to their souls, for that which will be the beginning of their salvation. Are they already the children of God and savingly united to Christ? Ask your heavenly Father to give them his Holy Spirit, and you pray that they may receive larger measures of holiness, that their love to God and man may increase, and that they may have more faith, submission to the divine will, patience and gentleness under injuries, and holy courage and zeal in the service of Christ.

Never approach the throne of grace to make mention of your own wants without remembering the wants of your

children, who are no less helpless and needy than yourself. Entreat for them that they may obtain mercy, and that they may find grace to help in time of need. Death may be near to them; they may soon be called to go through the dark valley. Surely that will be a fearful moment when their strength will fail and everything which now binds them to earth will be cut asunder. We should pray that our children may have grace to help in that solemn hour. This is our privilege. We may daily ask God to be near them in their last illness, and to enable them to face the king of terrors without fear.

Hitherto nothing has been said in regard to the benefits which you yourself would reap from prayer faithfully offered for your children. Prayer is

communion with God, whether it be an act of adoration, thanksgiving or confession, whether it be the offering up of desires for blessings for ourselves or others. If those for whom you intercede are your own children, it is still the same—you are still communing with God. If this is so, you are engaging in an act which will be sure to promote your growth in grace. To have communion with God is to use the most powerful of all means for increasing our spiritual life.

Another blessed result would almost inevitably follow : you would be led to intercede for many others. Other souls who would be rejoiced to be remembered by you would be thought of and prayed for. Thus you would grow into the habit of supplicating for those not so intimately related to you as the mem-

bers of your own family, until finally you would become confirmed in the habit of intercessory prayer. If the family relation of the household of faith is ever realized, it is in earnestly and affectionately commending our fellow-believers to God.

Says one who could speak from experience in regard to this matter, "I have received as a most precious and unmerited gift the power of feeling the things of the flock of Christ as if they were my own. You cannot imagine the happiness of this feeling. I dedicate an hour every evening to prayer and principally to intercession. I generally begin with the thanks due to God for all that he has done for every one of his sheep on that day. It is impossible for me to tell you the great delight of thus mixing myself up

with the people of Christ and of considering their benefits as my own. The thought which transports me most is that of how many souls have been, perhaps, this day joined to the Church! how many succored under temptation! how many recovered from their backslidings! how many filled with consolation! how many transported by death into the bosom of Christ! I then try to pray for the sweet "we," and to think of the necessities of my Christian friends. Besides, I have a list of unconverted persons for whom I wish to pray."*

But our intercessions should go forth for the whole body of Christ, his entire Church, for the needy and the perishing everywhere—for all, in fact, who

* "Memoir of Miss M. J. Graham." Quoted in Dr. Hamilton's "Mount of Olives."

are capable of being benefited by our prayers. One reason why believers are not more joyful is, that they fail to perform those acts, the constant repetition of which naturally tends to produce joy in the soul. But especially, perhaps, is joy the recompense of intercession.

“Heavenly joy is just the fruit which our blessed Lord bestows on such as devote themselves to intercession. This is very observable. There is a certain sunniness and light-heartedness about them for which there seems no ordinary cause, except that it is like the sweet lightening of the spirit which comes after a kind and unselfish action. This may partly be the reason. But there is another also. We see not the fruit of our intercession ; the spirit of prayer escapes out upon the earth, and

is everywhere like the hidden omnipresence of God. It is out of our sight. Nay, it is not like a series of distinguishable works. We hardly remember how much intercession we have made. Who can count the sighs he has sent up to God, or the wishes without words which the tongue of his heart has told into the ear of Jesus? And so, from the fruit being hidden, vainglory attaches to it less than to almost any other act which the Christian can perform. Whoever, then, desires to joy in God, to be equable in all things, to be happy and prompt in serving Jesus, to be patient with life because of the desire of death, let him throw away himself and his own ends, and betake himself to intercession as if it were his trade."

Let us resolve that, from this time forth, we will give ourselves more intently to the work of interceding for our children. Whether we pray for our offspring or not must decide what our distant descendants are to be, and what kind of influence those descendants will exert. Surely our fervent entreaties for God's blessing on our children and our children's children would be offered without ceasing were we able fully to comprehend the far-reaching results of such entreaties.

We have endeavored to present some of the incitements which may well stir up all parents to whose training God has committed little ones to plead for them incessantly. Let us remember that "there is nothing we can give to Christ which is so precious as our children. . . . One Joseph, one David, in

a family may bless a whole commonwealth, and even succeeding generations. It is chiefly in this way that the Church is propagated. In this way certainly it receives the most valuable part of its accessions, if that can be called an accession which is born and bred within its pale. Let the attentive reader ponder the undeniable statement that if all the children of all the evangelical Christians in America were converted to-day, our country would need nothing more to make it the happiest and most glorious nation that ever was on earth. This would be like millennial light ! What hope would at once break on all the land and on our prospective population ! There is, therefore, no blessing for our country which may be more reasonably prayed for than the

Christian health and proficiency of our sons and daughters." *

Let not Christian parents dare to devolve on others the great work which God has especially committed to them. For, as has already been said, it is plainly his will that believing parents should themselves be instrumental in the salvation of their own children.

* "The American Sunday-School and its Adjuncts,"
by James W. Alexander, D. D.

APPENDIX.

THE following interesting and suggestive rules were laid down by Cotton Mather, the eminent early New England divine, for the ordering of his domestic life, and especially for the discharge of his religious duties to his children.

1. He poured out continual prayers to the God of all grace for his children, that he would be a Father to them, bestow his Son and grace upon them, guide them by his counsel and bring them to glory. And in this action he mentioned them distinctly, every one by his name, to the Lord.

2. He began betimes to entertain them with delightful stories, especially scriptural ones, and he would ever conclude with some lesson of piety, bidding them to learn that from the story. Thus every day at the table he used himself to tell some entertaining tale before he rose, and endeavored to make it useful to the olive plants about the table.

3. When the children accidentally at any time came in his way, it was his custom to let fall some sentence or other that might be monitory or profitable to them. This matter occasioned labor, study and contrivance.

4. He betimes tried to engage his children in exercises of piety, and especially secret prayer; and he would often call upon them, "Child, don't you forget every day to go alone and pray as I have directed you."

5. He betimes endeavored to form in his children a temper of benignity. He would put them upon doing services and kindnesses for one another and for other children. He would applaud them when he saw them delight in it; he would upbraid all aversions to it. He would caution them against all revenges of injuries, and would instruct them to return good offices for evil ones. He would show them how, by this goodness, they would become like the good God and the blessed Jesus. He would let them discover that he was not satisfied except when they had a sweetness of temper shining in them.

6. When they had the use of the pen, he would employ them in writing out the most useful and profitable things that he could invent for them.

7. The first chastisement he would

inflict for any fault was to let the child see and hear in him an astonishment, and hardly able to believe he could do so base a thing, but believing they would never do it again. He would never come to give a child a blow except in cases of obstinacy or something that is very criminal. To be chased for a while out of his presence, he would make to be looked upon as the sorest punishment in his family. The slavish way of education carried on with raving and kicking and scourging, in schools as well as families, he looked upon as a dreadful judgment on the world. He thought the practice abominable, and expressed a mortal aversion to it.

8. He would often tell them of the good angels who love them, help them, guard them from evil, and do many

good offices for them, and ought not in any measure to be disobliged. He would not say much to them of the evil angels, because he would not have them entertain any frightful fancies about the apparition of devils.

9. When the children were capable of it, he would take them alone in his study to pray with them.

10. He found much benefit by catechizing the children. The answers of the catechism he would explain, with abundance of brief questions, which made them take in the whole meaning.

THE END.