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On no subject do the Scriptures more clearly or more earnestly teach the duty of parents than in reference to the religious education and salvation of their children. The relations of children to the Church are also clearly indicated in them. The doctrine of universal redemption, abundantly set forth in the Bible, embraces all children; and the covenant of God with the Church provisionally includes the children of believing parents, and also those brought by baptism into covenant relations.
with this "kingdom of heaven." These underlying and important facts are the grounds of the solicitudes, of the responsibilities, and of the activities of the Church in behalf of children and youth.

With Abraham and his spiritual seed God entered into a perpetual covenant, saying: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. Gen. xvii, 7, 9; Acts ii, 39. Abraham was a representative head of the Church and the head of his posterity with whom God entered into covenant relations. That the covenant was spiritual and religious, as also political and national, is evident from the Epistle to the Hebrews: Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . These all died in faith, not having received [realized] the promises, but having seen [saluted] them afar off, and No. 181.
were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. . . . But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Heb. xi, 10-16. In Rom. iv, 11-17, St. Paul sets forth the conditional and religious character of that engagement.

The duty of the Church to children is stated by Isaiah liv, 13: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." In the New Testament our Lord gives a full and clear statement of this relation underlying all personal and social religious duties to children. The Church of Christ is called the "kingdom of heaven," and "the kingdom of God," including the Church on earth and the Church in heaven. "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Eph. iii, 15. When stating the relations of "little children" to this spiritual family, our Lord said: "Suffer little children, and for-
bid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. xix, 14; Mark x, 14; Luke xviii 16. The character and relations of children are also stated: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Thus far we have set forth, from the Scripture stand-point, the gracious relations of children, both by covenant and in fact, to God, to his Church, and to families. In their relations to God they are accepted and accounted righteous. Of the universal Church of Christ they are members. By baptism they are brought into visible and covenant relations with the Church. These several relations are the grounds of all duties and labor for their religious instruction and their salvation. And no efforts that can be put forth by the Church or by parents are more than commensurate with their obligations and duty. The character of little children, and their spiritual relations to believing parents, are included in the covenant of God with Abraham and his
seed: “Thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”

In the name Enoch we have a beautiful and instructive instance of an early recognition of the duty of parental instruction. Enoch means “educated,” “instructed, “categorized,” and it was given to this child because of the purpose of his parents to carefully instruct and educate him for the duties of life. And the brief, historic statement we have of him, of his walk with God and of his glorious translation, shows how well and carefully he was instructed. Gen. v, 24; Heb. xi, 5. Of Abraham as a father, it is recorded: “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.” Gen. xviii, 19. This statement sets forth the duty of all parents to exercise a similar authority over their children. So does this: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord! and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

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And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine 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.” Deut. vi, 4–7.

The same line of duty is enjoined by Solomon (Prov. xxii, 6): “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The full force of this advice is better seen in a literal translation: Catechise a child in his way—at the opening of his way. It was to be by a method of questions and answers as to the path of obedience, during childhood and youth.

Under the Christian economy there is no letting down of the responsibility and no diminution of the authority of parents in this work of religious instruction. One of the most impressive scenes in the life of Jesus was that in the midst of parents and their children, when to the over-cautious disciples,
and to parents as well, who had been accustomed to consecrate their offspring to God and to affix the sign of their devotion, he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." In the line of these facts and privileges the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians (vi, 4): "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Let us now look at this subject from the constitution of the family. Of all social relations the family is the oldest and most important. Out of the family grew society, the Church, and the State. In its best and broadest sense government is the development and outgrowth of the divinely constituted family. The true idea of the family, as a divine institution running on from the beginning of society, is domestic, religious, and governmental. And as in the emotions and affec-
tions, in the intuitions and aspirations of our nature, we are designed to be religious, so this feature of the family is the predominant one; and in the good providence of God the chief wants of childhood are provided for in this original constitution of society—the family. In the privileges and duties of life parent and child are closely bound together. In the conditions and relations of children thus divinely committed to parents for instruction in righteousness, are the germs of character to be developed, the beginning of life to be instructed and shaped, the seeds of thought to be matured, and the whole process of imparting truth and of guarding against error and sin.

During their most hopeful and yet most exposed age children are intrusted to parents, who can and should exercise the most sedulous care for them. By the force of instinct and affection parents are the rightful guardians of their children. As the princess of Egypt said to the mother of the child Moses, to whom it was strangely committed for a
time, so, by the conditions and relations of
the family, God says to parents: "Take this
child and nurse it for me." There is no trust
like it, no responsibility equal to it. Infolded
in a "little child" there is all that human ef­
forts can bring out and complete. The truths
to be taught, the influences to be shed forth,
and the biases to be given them should be
healthful, religious, and wise. Christianity
furnishes the underlyings and surroundings,
supplies the requisite means, gives the needed
helps, and enforces the truths necessary to en­
able parents to bring up their children in the
nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We have an apposite and encouraging ex­
ample of these things in the person of Tim­
othy, brought up under the instruction and
discipline of his mother, aided by the grand­
mother. The record is: "Continue thou in
the things which thou hast learned and hast
been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast
learned them; and that from a child [babe,
infant] thou hast known the holy Scriptures
which are able to make thee wise unto salva­
tion, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim. iii, 14, 15. The conversion of Timothy had not been so young, nor his ministry so effective, nor his life so commendable, nor his episcopal office so dignified and useful, had he not been well and early instructed in Bible truths, as parents can teach. Another instance is that of Samuel—a name that means “asked of the Lord”—who was early taken by his parents to the house of God, where he was made familiar with its services, associations, and their significance. As soon as weaned he was devoted and put to service and instruction in the temple. In his youth he became a prophet of God. In manhood and in old age he was the head of the school of prophets and a judge in Israel. We have a reason for his saintly character and useful life in the following statement of his mother: “For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.” 1 Sam. i, 27, 28.
Earnest and honest labor is productive of good results. God has ordered it. And in nothing is it more evident or more blessed than in the religious instruction of children in the family and by their parents. And it is doubtless the duty of parents to say what shall first, most constantly, and most considerately be brought into contact with the heart of the child. The very conditions and nature of children demand that such an education be given them, and such influences be shed upon them, as the experience and life of godly parents prompt and lead them to bestow. In virtue of the atonement they are somewhat prepared at hand for the skill and power of their parents. Being "of the kingdom of heaven," the directive forces of truth and grace may be brought to bear upon them in the family. No other influences, however well conducted, can fully take the place of parental instruction given amid the familiar and tender associations of a religious home. Lord Brougham said that children learn more the first eighteen months than during the
same length of time in any part of their subsequent life, because they then receive the germs of thought and the strongest bias of soul. Once a child, when asked why a certain tree grew crooked, said, “Somebody trod on it, I suppose, when it was little.” And it is sad that most of the forces which press upon children, outside of Christian families and of the Church, are like the tread of feet upon a twig.

We know, and it is not to be disguised, that some children are strangely wayward, not easily led or controlled, and that parents are not always responsible for it. And yet, did they see the reasons for the fact, did they study the disposition of their offspring and endeavor to wisely direct their efforts, the cases of hopeless defection and perversity would be few. In seeking, therefore, for the adaptation of means to ends in the family and in the Church, the philosophy of things must be taken into account; that is, the means should be adapted to the character, to the conditions, and to the needs of children.
1. In the order of God the adaptation of surroundings and means to the character of children is well provided for in that they are intrusted to their parents who preside at "the opening of the way of life" and direct the educational forces. The Church of Christ also extends her fostering care and attention by means of the Sunday-school and its appliances, and by the use of the ordinances of the Church.

2. So, too, the means should be suited to the condition and situation of children. The divine arrangement is that, being members of pious families and susceptible of good influences and instruction, they be brought under the power of good examples, "in order that they may be brought up to lead a virtuous and holy life." But in the ordinary and promiscuous associations of life there are many evils to be guarded against and propensities to be restrained. The world is more full of sin than of holiness, and unless children be well and early guarded against evil and wisely instructed in goodness, they will the more need the fostering care of the Church.
and the associations and instructions of the Sunday-school.

3. The means should be adapted to the needs of children. These are best known to parents, who are not accustomed to give a stone for bread, nor a scorpion for an egg. With authority devoid of austerity, with instruction that is not rigorous, and with sweetness in love, should the several duties of family religion be performed. If, however, as is too common, any of these things be neglected, then the appliances of the Sunday-school should be winningly and prayerfully brought to bear upon the neglected children. Next to parental influences I would bring this manifold and fostering care and work of the Church to the young. It is a nursery of piety, a school of learners. It should employ teachers having the best talent, the ripest experience, and the warmest hearts. It were well if parents themselves were teachers in this department of work. Having begun the work at home, they are prepared to carry it on under other circumstances.

Now, in order to meet these three things,
there should be an intelligent understanding of the constitution of the family, of parental obligation, and of the fostering care of the Church in reference to the work to be done. As the spirit of the age calls for zealous workers, so does Christianity demand devout and earnest laborers. Work is productive. It begets genius and develops power. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." "We are workers together with God." So wisely arranged are the several departments and agencies of most modern Sunday-schools, that religious instruction and example may be early and effectively given. No more interesting lessons, when judiciously selected and connectedly arranged, can be taught than those from the Bible. No illustrations are more apposite. And to none are they better suited than to childhood and youth. Since the more effective organization of this department of Church work, the number of early conversions has been greatly increased.
and the largest accessions to the Church come from the Sunday-school. And it may be that the future of our nation, as also of the Church, depends as much on the number, character, and efficiency of this auxiliary as on any other educational agency. In accordance with the ideas herein set forth, the Churches of America have taken high ground, and are making enlarged provisions for the instruction and salvation of the rising generation. The provisions and teachings of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as set forth in her Book of Discipline, are fully abreast with any other.

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No. 181.