

seed. Our Father in heaven works not but in the use of means—whether in the natural or spiritual kingdom. Conversion, no doubt, is a moral miracle, but it is one which we have no right to expect without employing the means ordained of God. And while He is Sovereign in the matter of salvation, to whom of right belongs the gift of the Spirit,—yet if the parent or the Church, or both, are in the exercise of a faith which must have respect to the Divine commands, training up the children of the covenant in the way of the Lord, they have reasonable ground for expecting the conversion of those children, and of claiming the fulfilment of that precious promise in Isaiah: “I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” The reaping will invariably correspond with the sowing. The incorruptible seed of the Word deposited in the virgin soil of young hearts will (by the Spirit’s blessing) be productive of saving results—and that in meet proportion to the measure of effort and amount of toil expended in preparing the heart for the good seed of the kingdom; so that in some it will produce thirty-fold, in others sixty, and in more even an hundred-fold.

Next in importance to moral instruction, as well as next in the order of nature, is the force of *example*. The Bible order is first *nurture*, then *admonition*; and included under this latter is *example*. In the moral training of youth, with a view to their conversion, precept without example would be of little avail. The eye and the ear of youth are both sensitive organs in the imbibing of moral impressions. Proverbially quick to observe the faults or inconsistencies of others, children will profit little by word-teaching, when their instructors convey the idea that their profession and practice are in diametric opposition. The legitimate outcome of such a course of training must and will be hypocrisy. No training at all would be better than this, in so far that the virgin soil of unbroken ground would be there to operate on by right influences, instead of having the soil pre-occupied and rankly crowded with the weeds of hypocrisy, religious formality without the power, worldly-mindedness, and sin. There is great danger in an age when we are free from persecution, and when the current of worldly aims is so powerful, of the Church of God drifting into a condition of luxurious ease, and among the more prominent defections of the present day, the sin of which lies at the door of parents, is the want of *family training*—including, as that term does, instruction in religious truth, godly example on the part of parents, and the right government of youth. The old sin of Eli, in “not restraining his sons” when they “made themselves vile,” is too common, alas! among professors of Christianity, while the faithful conduct of Abraham in commanding his children and household, instructing them in the way of the Lord, is far from being the universal practice of the Church visible. The loosened rein is too often thrown over the neck of children and youth, and the result is that many are rushing madly on to destruction.

It is not, then, in any spasmodic efforts that the remedy for existing evils is to be found. It is not, we humbly think, in any special or occasional services for the young, however well-intentioned, that a moral panacea exists. The root of the evil lies in the want of well-directed, systematic, prayerful effort in the family, and on the part of parents! The family is the nursery of the Church. This is why God in His infinite wisdom ordained that *the family*, as such, should be placed in close juxtaposition with the Church, made a part of the covenant Israel of God. We have the most abiding faith in this Divine method of dealing with the children of the covenant, in its wisdom, its adaptation to the wants of society, its ulti-