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Charles Richmond Henderson Ph. D., D.D. ^a

^a President, The Department of the Home, Religious Education Association; Professor, The University of Chicago

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Family Worship

CHARLES RICHMOND HENDERSON, Ph. D., D. D.

President, The Department of the Home, Religious Education Association; Professor,
The University of Chicago

From many directions come to our knowledge evidences of interest in the awakening of the spirit of domestic religion. Not only do pastors preach on the subject and exhort their hearers to keep alive the flame of devotion at the family altar, but serious thought is given to helps for those who feel the difficulty of giving suitable expression to the deeper thoughts of the spirit.

These difficulties are very great, as may be realized when we consider the complexity of the problem. There is, first of all, the vast distance between the state of adult consciousness and the narrow experiences and undeveloped nature of childhood; and where there are several children the different needs of age and temperament and disposition must be regarded. Yet the very purpose of family worship is to unite all the members in one community of feeling and fellowship and to strengthen in this little society the bond with the universal brotherhood of believers and with the Father of all.

In selecting or composing prayers we must consider the child itself in its own individual devotions; the prayer of a child who may, as at table, lead the thought of all; and the parents themselves when they act as head of the group and seek to voice the needs of all; and the parents when they pray alone.

Among the collections which may be mentioned now by way of illustration is that of Dr. Lyman Abbott, "For Family Worship" (Dodd, Mead and Co., 1883; 455 pages). This volume contains selections of Scriptures arranged under the heads: The Life of Moses, The Life of David, The Life of Christ, The Life of Paul, The Christian Life and Special Occasions. There are prayers for morning, evening, special occasions, short prayers and collects, thanksgiving prayers, children's evening prayers and grace before and after meals. This is a very helpful com-

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pilation made with care and available for a great variety of occasions.

There is, however, much demand for smaller and cheaper collections, with a somewhat different arrangement. Thus we have "Prayers for Parents and Children" (Young Churchman Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 29 pages). There are short prayers suitable for children to offer for themselves, and there are prayers for the parents to offer when they are praying for their children. There are no Scripture selections in this little collection.

We may call attention to "Four Weeks of Family Worship", by Rev. William E. Barton, D. D. (The Puritan Press, Oak Park, Illinois, 1905, 32 pages). The program includes a verse for the day, which may be memorized; a brief Scripture lesson; a short hymn; a prayer which may be followed by the Lord's Prayer. Dr. Barton suggests that this ritual may be used by busy families who must hurry to the daily task if they will wait a few precious moments at the breakfast table and join in the beautiful service.

The choice of really devotional and suggestive passages of the Bible is not always easy to busy persons, and a hurried selection sometimes hits upon verses which are anything but edifying. To avoid the perils of such choice without thought and to direct undistracted attention instantaneously upon significant and helpful words a large number of books have been prepared. It may be worth while to give the titles here of "Daily Manna" and "Daily Light" (the latter published by Bagster and by Potts). Many persons prefer to mark their Bibles and return to their favorite verses to find them in their natural surroundings and order. Much can be said for this preference.

It is not pretended that we have here given the best list, but the books named will be useful to some persons and readers of THE JOURNAL will confer a favor on the Committee on Family Religious Education by sending to them, in care of the chairman, the names of collections which have been found adapted to the devotional needs of the home, with further criticisms and suggestions for later studies.