

THE
A M E R I C A N
NATIONAL PREACHER.

A
REPOSITORY OF ORIGINAL SERMONS,

FROM
LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY REV. F. C. WOODWORTH.

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• Corresponding with previous volumes.

THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

I.

GOD'S MORAL SYSTEM, SUPERIOR TO THE MATERIAL.

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“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fall.”—LUKE xvi. 17.

THE conception of the Material System is naturally accompanied in the mind by the impression of its permanence. Even the child perceives the solidity and hardness of the objects that surround him; and their power at once so absolutely to uphold and to restrict him, may well seem the evidence of their necessary duration. And as he comes to understand more fully the extent, and structure, and the history of the system, this first impression is naturally confirmed. As he learns how vast the Earth is,—not bounded by the horizon as he supposed, but bearing upon its mighty bosom islands, and realms, and empires, and continents even, with fathomless oceans poured round them as their drapery; as he examines the physical structure of the earth, and drives his drill into the granite bars that lock and interlock beneath its surface, or traces the ridges of rock and iron that stretch across it as its ribs of strength; as he follows backward the many generations that in succession have lived and labored upon its globe, and feels how changeless it has been through all their changes,—how absolutely it is now the same as when the Roman eagles traversed its surface, as when the temple of the Sun was standing in Palmyra, as when the hundred-gated Thebes stretched its stupendous front along the Nile; nay, as passing backward from even this computation he learns through what vast cycles and periods, and into what remote, impenetrable abysses, the researches of the naturalist seem to carry its duration:—and most of all, as rising from this view of the Earth, he learns to comprehend in some degree the magnitude of the System in which it is but part,

XX.

DUTIES OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS.

 BY REV. JOSEPH F. TUTTLE,

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"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; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."—GENESIS xviii. 19.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."—JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

"For I have told him, that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not."—1 SAMUEL iii. 13.

IN each of these passages, the responsibilities of parents to their children stand prominent, and in the first two those responsibilities are extended to all composing the household. The Lord commended Abraham because he would enjoin his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, and Joshua boldly declares that his house as well as himself, shall serve the Lord. The honor of these eminent men, did not consist in doing more than their duty, nor did the curse on Eli's family arise from neglecting a work of supererogation, but one of highest obligation and necessity.

These facts in sacred history furnish a theme of immense importance, viz. *the responsibilities of the heads of households.*

By the head of a household, I mean, primarily, any one who stands at the head of, and has control of a family, who, by the laws of God and man, is placed in this relation to a family.

In commending Abraham it is to be remarked, that the name of Sarah is not mentioned, and also that Joshua does not qualify his vow so as to depend on the aid of his wife. So also the wife of Eli is not mentioned.

A household, according to the Scripture, and common use, may consist of a wife, of children, and of those in the employ or under the guardianship of the head, residing in the family. Children, wards, servants, apprentices, and other laborers connected with the family, are all embraced in the definition of the household. Here, as in all other relations, responsibility is coëxtensive with obligation.

And in examining the responsibilities of heads of households, I may remark,—First, that whatever those responsibilities may be, the Scriptures make no exception in favor of the age or any other circumstances connected with members of the household. The fact

of having attained legal majority, or the fact of being of a different religion, or even that of the dependent being older than the head of the family, are nowhere mentioned as exceptions. The only question to be considered is this, Does the person belong to the household in such a sense that he is under the control of its head? Abraham had a great household, yet the text no more exempts from the general law, the gray-headed servant, than the young herdsman; the steward Eliezer of Damascus, than Ishmael or the child of promise. All the household were included without one specified exception. The same unqualified law is seen in the vow of Joshua, "As for me and *my house*, we will serve the Lord." In the fourth commandment, the obligation to keep the sabbath is not only imposed on the head, but the household also. Nor is it made a general obligation, resting on each individual, for which each one is himself responsible, but the obligation to enforce that law on all the household is imposed on the head. He was not even to consider his duty bounded by the limits which embrace the son and daughter, the man-servant and maid-servant, the ox and the ass, but as extending even to the stranger who might be holding a temporary relation to the household.

This is an exceedingly important view, since it is common among pious men to relieve themselves of some part of those obligations which God has fixed on them. Some parents seem to feel that they are not bound to look after the conduct of their children who may have attained the age of sixteen, eighteen or twenty years, much less when they attain their majority, although still members of the household. Others entertain the same erroneous opinion concerning their domestics and laborers. They sometimes excuse themselves, by saying, the man or woman is of age, or of a different religious belief; or he is so ignorant and low-minded as to have no religious sentiment, or some other excuse. To such an extent is this true, that some domestics are suffered to live years in pious families, without the heads of those families insisting on an undoubted right,—the presence of all committed to their care at the regular worship of God at home, and publicly.

I cannot forbear enlarging on a topic which is becoming practical in this country. A large number of families rely on colored or foreign laborers. The latter are especially to be pitied, because so many pious employers regard themselves as favored with a special exemption from the rigid principles on which God has constituted the household. These laborers, in many cases, believe things which are likely to prove fatal to their salvation. We need not go so far as to say that no Romanist can be saved, but that the most of those who make up our laborers, are in great ignorance of the way of salvation through Christ, and in many cases, with all their devotion to their religion, they do not consider profane swearing, drunkenness, and other vices as inconsistent with that religion. They know more about confessing sin to a fellow-sinner than to God, about the

Virgin than Christ, about holy water than the pure water of life, Education has done nothing for them but to bind chains upon them, and to draw around them a thick veil of darkness. To such an extent is this true, that persons may be found among us who are just as ignorant of what God requires of them to be saved, as if they had always lived in the darkest corner of Burmah or China.

And when such voluntarily become members of our household, does not God in his providence make it our duty if possible to remove the deep darkness, and break the heavy chains which afflict these strangers? And yet some of us permit such to remain months and years under our roofs, without once telling them kindly what we conceive to be our duty to them: a duty so plainly involved in the household relation, that we must insist on maintaining it. It is greatly to our shame to be guilty of this neglect. Faithfulness on our part might save many deceived souls from delusion, and bring them out of deep darkness into the clear light of the gospel of Christ.

When a foreigner entered the family of an Israelite, without regard to his religious belief or worship, he must conform to those religious regulations, which Jehovah had prescribed for the conduct of the household. If he refused to comply he could not remain. Not only in that case must he leave the family, but the nation. Nor do I speak of this as a matter of religious dictation, but of truth. There is something unseemly, and outraging all proper law, that a foreign priest, without a single sympathy for the Bible into which our civil institutions are engrafted, should be allowed to exert more power in our houses than we ourselves, when we are convinced that he is wrong in doctrine and practice, and that we are right, that his teaching is according to the tradition of the elders, and that ours is from God. It is insufferable that, when a good man is striving to lead his own children to heaven through means of family religion, any members of his household should be instigated to disturb even the time devoted to worship, not only by absentsing themselves, but by continuing their customary work.

And does it not appear plain, that those heads of households who permit such things, have forgotten a plain principle laid down in the Scriptures, that no exception is made in favor of any member of the household, be he a heathen, a Mohammedan, a Romanist, or an infidel? Such do not imitate Abraham, commanding his household to keep the right way of the Lord; nor Joshua, who boldly said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Let this illustration stand for the principle in its application to all the possible cases arising in the regulation of family religion.

We may now consider, secondly, the nature of the obligation which rests on the heads of households.

And for the sake of clearness and simplicity, we may consider the nature of this obligation in two parts: viz., 1st, the obligation to secure a proper external conduct in those who compose the

household; and 2d, the obligation to use all scriptural means to bring every member of the household to a saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

1st. The obligations resting on the heads of households to secure a proper external conduct in those committed to their care. This brings the history of Eli's family distinctly before us. It is worthy of special notice, that Eli gave the best advice to his sons, for "he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil doings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear. Ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If any man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" (1 Sam. ii. 23-25.) We can scarcely imagine a more searching exhortation than is found in these words. The age of these sons we do not know, but gather from the context that they had nearly or quite attained to manhood.

When Samuel repeated to Eli what God had communicated to him, the reply of Eli showed that he possessed personally no ordinary piety: "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." (Ibid. iii. 18.) And he possessed another notable trait of piety. Israel was battling with the Philistines, and they had taken the ark of the Lord that it might save them out of the hands of their enemies. The sons of Eli, already marked as early victims of the divine displeasure, accompanied the ark. The aged priest and father sat by the wayside, watching for news concerning the battle, and lo, what was the trouble uppermost in his heart? Was it those sons with the curse hanging over them? No. The record of the fact is very affecting: "Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God." (Ibid. iv. 13.) The panting messenger has already told him, "Hophni and Phinehas are dead;" but the narrative informs us that two sons cut off in one day, did not inflict the keenest pang. It was "when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off his seat backwards by the side of the gate; and his neck brake, and he died." (v. 18.) The heaviest judgment which came on this extraordinary man, was the wrong done to the Lord, in that the divine prediction (Ibid. ii. 32) was fulfilled: "Thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation."

From this narrative we may gather an important lesson concerning the obligation of heads of households to secure a proper external conduct in those committed to their care. The law, as it pertained to the Israelites, was plain and severe. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out to the elders of his city, and unto the gate of the place. And they shall say unto the elders of his city, this our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the

men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die; so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear." (Deut. xxi. 18-21.) The parent at his peril must not suffer the sin specified on his son. He was not to be a mere moral suasionist, but was to chastise his son. He was not to resort to the last punishment, until wise teachings had been enforced with the rod. If these means failed, in order to arrest the contagion which might corrupt the whole community, he must make the case public. The crime is to be alleged and proved, and then the criminal was to be stoned to death.

The Scriptures do not hint that Eli had done anything more than to remonstrate with his sons. He did not chastise them, and consequently was debarred from the final resort. The church of God, in consequence, was greatly dishonored, because this father, as the head of a household, had neglected legally and rigidly to execute the laws of the Lord. And this pertained to external conduct. Eli could not change the hearts of his sons. Many sons might have been as vile at heart as Hophni and Phinehas, and yet maintained a proper external conduct. Plainly, in this respect, Eli was responsible, and because he did not properly meet this responsibility, the curse was to rest on his house forever.

Our laws do not suffer such a resort in case of filial and incorrigible disobedience, as that pointed out in the Mosaic code, and yet there can be no doubt that the essential elements of that code are of divine origin and perpetual force. Hence we may consider this as an argument in point, and illustrated by cases which are no more practical than painful.

Profaneness is not only one of the most foolish and useless of vices, but one most displeasing to God. So long as a child or servant is in a family, the head of that family is responsible for his observance of the third commandment. What possible right has any father to permit his son, unrebuked, to take the name of God in vain? What right has any householder to permit a laborer in his employ to breathe out blasphemy against Jehovah? In the twenty-fourth chapter of Leviticus this very sin is specified, and the stranger is placed on the same footing as the son. I will go farther and ask, where is the right of any head of a household to confine himself to mere remonstrances in his attempts to check this evil in those under his control?

By the same plain rule, we may judge the conduct of households in regard to the Sabbath. The fourth commandment settles this question beyond dispute. We have no warrant to allow our sons or dependants to travel on the Sabbath, or otherwise trespass on holy time, without such excuse as shall be valid at the bar of God. It is needless to say that this embraces improper recreations and pursuits, and conduct in the house of God. The heads of households are held responsible for a proper outward respect to all the public as well as social duties of religion.

Perhaps facts will sustain me in the assertion, that a most urgent want of the community is here developed. The corruption of morals and manners, the growth of ruinous vices, and the destruction of souls, are progressing with the fatality of an epidemic, because this plain scriptural principle, this essential element of the household institution, has been so extensively forsaken. I appeal to the heads of households to restore this principle, which is as scriptural as it is safe, and admirable as it is necessary to the prominence and power with which God, who created man, has dignified it. He who walks according to its divine directions in the control of his family, will receive the reward of Abraham, whilst the one who either neglects or wilfully disobeys it, will bring on himself and his house the curse of God on every Eli whose children make themselves vile, and he restrains them not.

The same rule applies to all the external conduct of a household : attendance on improper amusements, frequenting places where vicious habits are likely to be contracted. Sufficient is a word to the wise.

But I must hasten to consider the nature of this obligation in a second aspect.

2. It enjoins on the heads of households the diligent use of all scriptural means to bring those under their care to a saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ.

And here it is proper to state a cardinal doctrine, not for the purpose of argument, but to guard against misapprehension. The regeneration of the heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. To present and urge the duty of parents, guardians, and masters, is not to question in the slightest degree this truth, which is affirmed by Scripture and facts.

No one in so many words questions the propriety of a religious education in the household ; but the danger is, that in this age of cheap religious books, of Sabbath-schools, and other means of religious instruction, we shall depart from the plan of God, ordained as of perpetual force. We are liable, in our practice, to place the plan of Raikes above the plan of God, and to commit to other teachers the work which belongs to the head of the family. This is just as radically a departure from the right way, as would be a benevolent plan to intrust the clothing and feeding of our families to a few kindly-disposed persons. This feeding and clothing of children in the wholesale way proposed by some modern philanthropists, is just as rational as to commit the religious training of a household solely to Sabbath-school teachers and preachers of the gospel. In its proper place and relations, each of these instrumentalities is vastly important ; but when either of them supplants the home instruction, its results are evil, with slight mitigation. Jehovah is perfect, and he knew the wants of man as well when he gave his commandments to Moses, as he knows them now. He did not commission his servant to organize Sabbath-schools in

which the young might learn the dealings of God with their fathers. Such a course would have sunk the nation into a horde of ignorant and unfeeling barbarians, out of whose minds, in a few generations, the recollections of those stirring events should have died. Jehovah understood the nature of man when he organized the means of keeping the Exodus fresh in the minds of his people. Accordingly, he constituted each head of a household an oracle to answer the inquiries of the thoughtful, and to impart religious instruction to all.

Here is the institution, the home-school, as it came from the forming hand of perfect wisdom. "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. And these words which I command thee this day shalt be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach diligently to thy children, and shall 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. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates." (Deut. vi. 4-9.) Here are words which are redolent of honor. They savor altogether of honor. The father is the teacher, and his business is not to be given into the hands of an hireling, or even some benevolent friend. How lifeless any school compared with this, in which the living realities of truth perfume the atmosphere, and lend a savor alike grateful and efficient! We cannot too much admire the wisdom of this arrangement, nor too closely imitate it in the religious education of our families.

"Would God" this sacred institution were revived into its ancient dignity and power; when religion should be taught at home; when the first lessons of truth should be blended with the fondlings of our fancy, and the more sedate endearments of youth, when the secret courtesies of life should become a gentle but mighty instrumentality in preserving the feet of children from the ways of sin. But how often is it, that fathers are more ready to talk of God and heaven to strangers than to their children! How often does family worship become either a formal, or else tedious exercise, the influence of which is to chill, and not to warm the hearts of the young! How often whole families grow up and leave the fire-side of home, without having enjoyed any systematic means put forth for their salvation! The Sabbath school, the Bible class, the pulpit, and the casual visit of the pastor, become practically the supplanters of home, or rather the meagre resorts to which we are compelled to fly, instead of being what they ought to be, the potent auxiliaries of the more potent influences of home.

Oh could we know that all parents in the church are in faith seeking to answer this home responsibility, many anxieties about the future condition of the church would be spared; many parents

would not be mourning over their unregenerate offspring who have reached mature years ; many heads of households would not look with shuddering apprehension back at those once in their employ or under their care, who have not only left their families unconverted, but without any well-ordered effort on their part to that end.

The nature of this responsibility, plainly then, is such, that every head of a household is bound to employ at home all proper means, to lead each one committed to his care to Christ, whether he be a heathen, a Romanist, an infidel, his own child, or a stranger sojourning within his gates. The head of the family is the shepherd of that flock, and a heavy woe shall overtake the shepherd through whose unfaithfulness any member of that flock perishes.

Let fathers pray, teach, and act at home, as though they stood at the very sources of power, and held the keys of heaven. They may be grateful for the instructions of the sanctuary and the Sabbath-school, but they are not to commit their jewels altogether to other workmen however skilful. None can feel for them as parents ought to feel, nor labor as they ought to labor, that these jewels may shine in the diadem of Christ. Let strangers manage your property, Christian parents, for even though they rob you of it all, the loss can be repaired or endured, but over these immortal souls, which God has intrusted to you, hold the power yourselves, and see that the Lord of glory is honored in their salvation, by your faithful fulfillment of those conditions which are necessary to secure the efficient workings of the Holy Spirit. Begin with your lisping infants, cause light to dawn on their hearts early, and gently draw them to Christ. Secure the might of prayer, remembering how infinitely willing God is to grant his Holy Spirit. Work early and late and diligently in this enterprise, and prove God herewith, if he will not grant you the desires of your heart in the conversion of each member of your household.

From these trains of thought we may infer,

1. The immense responsibility of being the head of a household. The relation is connected with all that is good and excellent in this world, and desirable in the world to come. Every child, every servant, every dependant, augments the responsibility, until every such person may well cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Let every head of a family enjoin it upon himself to ponder this responsibility in all its greatness, its issues of eternal life and death, and then set himself with earnestness and prayer to the work assigned him, as one who must give account to God for one of the most momentous trusts ever committed to a sinful, fallible, and weak steward.

2. The importance of the household institution. It is God's ordained school for the religious education of our race. And in that school some of the greatest and most useful of men have been trained to fill high stations. Moses, the adopted son of a princess, was not educated without the aid of his pious mother—God

plainly indicating by this, that "all the learning of the Egyptians" could not compensate the loss of this influence. Samuel was the child of prayer, whose heart was regenerated while he was yet a babe, and Timothy could bear witness to the faith of his "grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice." And as it were to impress this magnificent truth most deeply on the head of every household, to show in what esteem God holds the family school, the child Jesus was educated in it, and went forth from its sacred precincts to do the will of his Father, and to make an atonement for the sins of the world. If parents wish their sons to resemble a Samuel, a Timothy, or an Edwards, they must lay the foundation for that resemblance in the nursery; they must be, according to divine appointment, God's magistrate to restrain the waywardness of childhood, and God's teacher in justice and judgment; they must be God's ambassador to bear with tearful earnestness the messages of dying love from the Redeemer; they must be like the importunate wrestler with the angel of the covenant, crying out with holy energy, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" in the salvation of these immortal souls! Oh, be faithful at home, and God will honor you as he did Abraham, and not curse you as he did Eli. You shall perpetuate the blessings of redemption to other generations, instead of sending on your posterity such withering curses as fell on the descendants of Eli.

3. The neglect of this principle is the undoubted cause of ruin to many children of pious parents. Hophni and Phinehas, with their posterity, were the victims who perished in consequence of this, and it is to be feared many since their day and for the same reason have raised fruitless lamentations in the world of despair. And now, let me earnestly inquire, has this congregation no Eli, with children doomed to eternal darkness because their parents restrain them when they make themselves vile? Say, fathers, shall any of your children be cursed with a curse, a withering curse, an ever-abiding curse, because their father was an Eli?

4. We see also wherein consists the true hope of the Church. It is in the right education of children at home. By this, I do not say it would not be a cause of joy here, as well as in heaven, if the adults were converted. Would it might be done speedily! And yet were a whole generation of such brought into the Church, what a vast difference would there be between them and a generation indoctrinated in infancy, and so trained that the Holy Spirit might consistently implant true grace in their hearts, and thus, from the first, piety become the habit of heart and life? Our true hope is found in coming back to the scriptural plan of religious education. The hearts of children must be moulded, and their habits formed. We must fulfil the conditions rendering it consistent for the Holy Spirit to engraft true religion on their hearts, so that manhood shall find them like holy plants in the Church, bending under the delicious fruits of holiness, rather than as trees grown up to a maturity of evil,

whose wide-spreading branches must be cut away in order to graft in the scions of piety and holiness, or else to be cut down as cumberers of the ground, and burned with unquenchable fire.

Mothers, I beseech you to impress piety on the babes in your arms, and the children at your side. Fathers, I beseech you to breathe religion into these young hearts, which daily are drinking in lessons of some kind from your eyes, your lips, and your actions. Oh, parents, suffer not your children to depart from the fire-side altar without knowing, as Hannah did, that they are growing before the Lord. With the divine assistance, so freely promised, and so faithfully given, you can accomplish much. Work, then, "while it is called to-day, for the night cometh, in which no man can work."

XXIV.

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