

THE
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Miscellaneous Articles.

HOW SHALL MAN BE JUST WITH GOD?

"HAVE you read the Presbyterian Tract on Justification?" "Yes, sir, long ago, and consider it one of the ablest and best treatises on this subject, which we have ever seen, particularly for popular reading—it being brief, clear, and scriptural." "You misapprehend my question; I do not allude to the Tract written many years since by the Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, and forming one of the series of tracts issued by the Presbyterian Board of Publication; but to a new tract, recently published by the New School Presbyterian Publication Committee, and penned by the Rev. Albert Barnes." As we had not seen this tract, we availed ourselves of an early opportunity to obtain it. We commenced its perusal with more than ordinary interest, and scarcely laid it down until it was finished. Our particular interest arose from the report (which we hoped to find true) that its author was becoming more orthodox than he had been in former years, and especially from the circumstance that the tract is virtually endorsed by the New School Presbyterian Church, it being published with the sanction of fifteen of their prominent men (ministers and laymen), appointed by their General Assembly as a Publishing Committee. For their sakes, and for the sake of the cause of truth, we hoped to find this cardinal doctrine of Christianity treated in a scriptural and satisfactory manner.

The tract contains 132 pages, about 60 of which are occupied in discussing preliminary topics, to prepare the way for answering the question, which forms the title of the tract, "How shall man be just with God?" In those preliminaries we saw no evidence of the author's returning to old-fashioned orthodoxy. His views (expressed incidentally) on the nature of sin, the imputation of

Household Thoughts.

HOUSEHOLD RELIGION.

THAT the household of David was controlled by his religious faith and practice, is testified by the word of God to Solomon, after the dedication of the temple, when it was said to him, If thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments, then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, there shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. He ruled his household in the fear of God; and he resolved to rule his kingdom as he ruled his house. Both as the head of a household, and the head of a nation, he maintains all the exercises and forms of religious culture and discipline required by that dispensation of the grace of God under which he lived.

We learn from this, that religion, even from those early times, is an ordinance of the family, and has, in the family, the centre and seat of its social life. And of the exercises of religion which are proper to the household an indispensable part consists of the daily reading of the Scriptures and united prayer. For the sake of those Christian families where these exercises *are* maintained, as well as those in which they are not, it is our duty to consider often the grounds on which the practice rests, and to show how much the prosperity of Christian truth and righteousness depends, and ever must depend, on the right performance of religious duty by the heads of families, and particularly of daily prayer.

We shall illustrate first the duty of the Christian head of a family to maintain the daily exercises of devotion with his family.

1. The duty arises out of the domestic relations of the Christian parent.

Every Christian must apply his religious principles in all the relations of his life. Whatever he does he must do in a Christian way. His Christian heart must shine in and through all the works of his life. Least of all should a Christian parent omit any means of instilling his own faith and hope into the minds and hearts of all in his house. And how can this be better done than by giving utterance to his faith and hope in God, in the hearing of all whom he is bound to lead in the way of Christian truth and duty? And let him do this in the solemn manner of religious devotion. Such are the relations of the head to the members of the household that

their hearts naturally become one in other things: and they would just as naturally become one in religion, where all do as they ought. In temporal affairs, the members join their interest with the interest of the head. They become jealous for his reputation with his neighbours—anxious for his success in his profession,—interested in his opinions and principles on all important subjects; and why should not this union of interest prevail among them, in regard to religion. It always will with proper means; and the head of the family has the natural desire that it should be so; and of all the means for bringing such unity about in the dear home of his earthly interests and affections, the most effectual will be this: to have his own heart right with God, and then exercise his right affections daily in the devout reading of the Scriptures and in prayer in his family. How can a Christian householder answer a good conscience before God and his brethren, who does not do so much as this, to guide his household in the fear of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ.

2. The obligation to maintain Christian devotion in the family arises out of the great fitness of the practice to promote religious culture. And first and chiefly will the master of the house himself find profit in it. More than in any other way, will he thus strengthen his faith, clear his views of truth, settle his Christian habits of life, and quicken his purifying hope of heaven. While he will also save himself the painful self-reproach in the dying hour, when he sees his children around without the faith and practice of Christians, that he has not led them to the Saviour by his own example of devotion.

As to the members of the family, it calls their attention daily to their spiritual interest and duty. And this is never effectually done in any other way. How very lax must be the religious discipline of a family, where the members are left wholly to impulses from religious neighbours, or public meetings, or their own disposition move them towards Christian duty. No Christian parent expects his children to improve by such means, in any other good thing, and how can you thus look for improvement in religion? What a space is filled, what a want is supplied, by this one domestic usage! An altar in the house for the daily sacrifice! What is the house without it? What would the house be without a table which offers its refreshment at the proper hours? What, without the pillow for nightly repose? Above all, what is the house as a dwelling for religious beings, without this means of religious culture and growth?

If the Christian householder has the true religious concern for his family, and a warm heart of desire for their spiritual welfare, the hour of family prayer is his very occasion. He has no other opportunity like that to express his heart in their hearing; to make them feel his Christian piety. Then he can so read, and cause them so to read the Holy Word, that they shall all drink somewhat

of its spirit; and the more will they partake of its spirit, if he is careful and resolute and wise, in guarding them against the influence of the world without. Then in his simple earnest prayer for his house, he can show them his own devout heart as he cannot do in any other way. There is great power in such exercises rightly performed; and all the more, when the general tone of the domestic life prepares the way for the good influence of a religious service. What else can the head of the family do that could be a substitute for this? And where this practice is maintained, how much it adds to the force and usefulness of all other means. When a father is in the habit of praying with his children, he can talk with them, with the more ease and effect. And while his prayers *express* his desire for their spiritual well-being, they quicken that desire, and strengthen it. His own soul is inspired with a sacred impulse. His children become imbued with the same grace. A Christian family without prayer; it is like a ship at sea without her sails; a machine without its moving force. But how rich and constant the flow of spiritual family blessings which we may receive from the Lord while as families we acknowledge him! Let the household, as such, reach forth its hand of faith in daily prayer for the blessing of Heaven, and that blessing will as surely be received, as the cistern receives the water of the shower which falls on the roof and flows down through the channels prepared for it.

3. The obligation to daily devotion in the family, is involved in the command to Christians, that they should pray without ceasing. This means that Christians should always be ready to embrace suitable opportunities for devotion. And one class of these opportunities consists of the morning and evening convenings of the family. Surely these could not be omitted by the Christian householder, who desires a perpetual spirit of prayer. Let this be the great end of his life, to maintain the spirit of prayer, to keep his heart in the love of God, and to bring all those beloved ones who are under his immediate influence, into fellowship with his own faith and love, and he will feel the want of the family altar. The daily Christian offering of prayer and praise will come to him like a heavenly breeze to refresh, and to bear him along in his spiritual course; and without this he would soon become weary and faint. Pray without ceasing. But in the strong current of worldly occupation, what a struggle it seems to keep the face heavenward, and hold one's course. How it tires the strongest wing of Christian faith, to strive against the gale across some wide field of worldliness; and what a relief to enter the serene and quiet atmosphere of the domestic circle, where the spirit finds repose, and can breathe refreshingly, and where faith can rest in its easy and natural motions, and look steadily at its heavenly prize. If one does not pray there, how far must he have fallen from the spirit of prayer. The force of the command,—Pray without ceasing,—is strong to

engage the Christian head of a family in religious exercises in his household.

4. A part of the obligation to family devotion is derived from the express regard of the God of grace for the family interest. The family is a little community, composed of immortal beings, whom the providence of God has thus bound together, that by his grace, he might bless them together. He feeds them all at one table of his bounty that he may feed them also together with the bread of life offered them through Christ.

For the same reason, the Lord has a form of the covenant expressly for the family; takes parents and children together under his dispensation of grace; calls the members holy when the head is holy, and requires the head to consider those whom providence has committed to his charge as the Lord's. The promise is to you and to your children. And he makes a broad and solemn distinction between those who thus stand in the covenant and all others: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name."

National blessings are properly sought by national supplication. When wide-spreading disease becomes fearful to the nation, the nation is called to fasting and prayer. When war is felt as a national calamity, the nation is summoned to fasting and prayer; and this is so natural a step, that it is always looked for in proportion as the persons in authority are governed by religious principle. And so in public doings. The chief magistrate, of true Christian principle, never fails to commend his country to the blessing of God, in all his public communications of any importance or solemnity. Legislatures and conventions for state or national purposes, just so far as the religious sense prevails among the majority of the members, solemnly commend their common interests to God, and implore his blessing on them, in their daily assemblies. It is not so, indeed, in bodies of irreligious men; but where a majority are controlled by Christian principle it is always so; and very frequently, perhaps even in most cases, the practice is upheld though but a small proportion of the body profess to be devout men. Now if religious solemnities are thus observed in opening the daily business of a body of persons who have a common interest at stake, which is to be secured by the blessing of God upon the united action of all the members, how much more should this be done in the family, a permanent body, which has the most vital interests at stake, to be secured by early religious impressions on immortal beings, on sinners to be redeemed by the grace of Christ; a body which has a special covenant of grace for itself, and particular laws by which the blessings of that covenant may be secured. Here is an assembly with a Christian head, to preside over all its proceedings; a head, not elected by the members but constituted by the providence of God; not to rule by laws and regulations adopted by the body, but receiving his powers directly from God,

to be himself the lawgiver, and by his faithful administration to be the minister of the grace of God to all the members. For such a body, so strictly religious in its constitution, its purposes, and all its proper offices, for such a body to proceed to its daily callings without commending itself to the blessing of God, betrays a lack of true piety in the controlling power, beyond what strikes us anywhere else. For we see it in no bodies of men having important business in charge, and professing Christian principle.

These facts show how the practice of daily devotion in the family arises from the Christian spirit in the head. This is one of the duties of the Christian life, in those who guide the household. Christians should exhort and encourage one another in respect to it. There is no department of Christian duty in which they can be more useful to one another than in this. The bond of Christian fellowship binds families together. The church covenant covers the covenant of the family. A part of the mutual watchfulness of the members of the church should be directed to this, among the many duties of the Christian profession. And who can compute the good results from faithfulness here.

The benefits of family worship where it is duly maintained are obvious to all.

It promotes spiritual communion among the members. Church fellowship is almost wholly maintained by exercises of devotion, in which Christians join with one another. So in the family, where the spirit of prayer lives in the head, it is communicated to the members. When the head of the family prays in the spirit in the hearing of all the members, the spirit will be awakened in the hearts of all the rest, unless they oppose some wilful resistance to it; for the members of the family are all under one covenant of grace; the promise of the Holy Spirit is to them all; and when it is given the parent, it is not for himself alone, but for his household; and if he is faithful on his part, and his household are led in the ways of the Lord, and are not suffered to be led captive by the world, they will all show themselves to be partakers of the same grace. This is the law of the Spirit of grace. It is communicated from one to the other, among those who sincerely seek the Lord together. Now the members of a family are very near to each other. If they have right affections among themselves, their mutual sympathies are tender and active above those of all other relations. There, more than anywhere else, can it be said, that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Let the Spirit of the Gospel live among them, and how free must the communion of the Spirit be, especially in the exercise of prayer, when the soul of the parent is communing with God, and all the members are under his influence, and endeavoring to follow him in his devotion.

Daily divine worship in the family helps the growth of piety in

the parents. We take for granted here, that both parents are united in maintaining religion in the household. If the parents would prevent the chill of worldliness from destroying all the warmth of their spiritual life, they can do nothing better than to call their family together habitually for daily prayer. It would make them more watchful over themselves. The parent needs such prompting for himself. He, more than all others may expect profit from it. It prepares his heart for religious intercourse with his family; and it gives him a power of utterance he would not otherwise possess. How much more productive must this be than any other social exercise of religion! It comes like the daily meals on which the body lives and grows. It causes a parent to reflect daily on his sacred relation to his family; to feel his responsibility as the head of religious influence to his household. It thus has a great part to act in securing his own perseverance unto the end. To the children and other members of the family, it is a great blessing to see themselves the subjects of prayer; and still better, if they are taught to take part in the prayer as their own, and not be mere hearers; to hear thanksgiving offered in their behalf, for the kindness of that Providence by which they live. It prepares the way for them to offer thanksgiving for themselves. The example is instructive. They learn what prayer is, in respect to their own experience and welfare, and by the blessing of the Lord they will imbibe its spirit. It is training children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord to pray with them.

The influence of daily orderly family worship on children is very great in forming them to the outward practices of religion. They become familiar with the form and the language, and the proper subjects of prayer. They learn a devotional language which serves them happily when disposed to pray for themselves. And even at the very hour of solemn prayer by the parent, the serious thoughts of his children will be turned to those petitions of his yearning heart for them, and will apply the prayer to themselves in a way that he may not suspect, and that he will in this world never know.

The prayer of a family may profit all the members by its fitness to occasions. Then it fixes attention, when it does not follow a lulling form, but speaks of things most present to the thoughts, the casualties of the day that is past, or the hopes and plans of the day that is begun. Who has not felt the solemn regard for duty, when he has heard the path of duty pointed out in the devout prayer of a parent; or felt a dread of danger, when dangers have been suggested, and the Divine protection sought against them; repentings for sin, when sins have been acknowledged to God, and his gracious forgiveness prayed for? The head of a family does his children a favour that can never be estimated, when he thus trains their thoughts and feelings into familiarity with the exercises of Divine worship.

There is no small advantage gained by parents with their children from the daily and reverent reading of the Scriptures. A family thus knows the Bible, which otherwise they will hardly do. An important part of education. To deny such a daily benefit as this to a household is worse, far worse, than to deprive them of a portion of their daily bread. Such an exercise hallows the family relation. Parent and child see each other in a sacred light. Brother and sister, while reading or hearing the holy word together, seem joined in a holy association which sanctifies natural affection, and surrounds the domestic centre with a celestial halo.

Now to whom does it belong to make the home of a household thus sacred to the hearts of the members as a dwelling of the Lord? To whom belongs the work of thus reconciling children to the ways of the Lord, and of thus co-operating with the Lord to make them humble and obedient disciples of Christ? It belongs to the parents; and not to either one alone, but to both. They are one, and must work as one in this thing. For a want of co-operation will either hinder the duty altogether, or so embarrass it as to prevent its proper effect. But in the forms of the service, the leader is the husband and the father. This, nature itself teaches. And when he declines the duty, even though it should be attempted by the mother, the absence of the father, or his silent presence, is a violence to propriety and to moral obligation, which tends to destroy the good effect of the whole. There are some parents whose own childhood and youth were blessed with these daily solemnities which they are denying to their own children. Is this right? Can they answer it to their own conscience and to God? How ungrateful to the Father of all family mercies, how cruel to the children and the children's children, to throw this mountain of unfaithfulness and sin across the channel in which the grace of the covenant is flowing down from generation to generation. How must the tender parent feel at the close of his life, when his children have all left the paternal roof, or come to the freedom of manhood without the hopes or the habits of believers in Christ, if he must charge himself with having neglected those means which are commonly so effectual.

J. W. Y.

Historical and Biographical.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DR. CUYLER.*

It may be mentioned as an historical fact, more important in the estimation of others, perhaps, than it was in his own, that Dr. Cuyler was

* This interesting Biographical Sketch is from the pen of the Rev. Dr JOSEPH H. JONES of Philadelphia, who preached a Discourse commemorative of the life and