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THE MORAL WORKING OF A HOUSEHOLD.

BY HORACE BUSHNELL, D. D.

JER. 7; 18. The children gather wood and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

In this lively picture, you have the illustration of a great and momentous truth—the *Organic Unity of the Family*. If it be an idolatrous family, worshippers of the moon, for example, such is the organic relation of the members, that they are all involved together, and the idol worship is the common act of the house. The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, the women prepare the cakes for an offering, and the queen of heaven receives it, as one that is the joint product of the whole family. The worship is family worship; the god of one is the god of all; the spirit of one the spirit of all.

And so it is with all family transactions and feelings. They implicate ordinarily the whole circle of the house, young and old, male and female, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. They act together, take a common character, accept the same delusions, practice the same sins and ought, I believe, to be sanctified by a common grace.

Whatever working there is in the house, all work together. If the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the cakes, the children will gather the wood, and the idol worship will set the whole circle of the house in action. The child being under the law of the parents, they will keep him at work to execute their plans, or their sins, as the case may be; and, as they will seldom think of what they do, or require, so he will seldom have any scruple concerning it. The property gained belongs to the family. They have a common interest and every prejudice, or animosity, felt by the parents, the children are sure to feel even more intensely. They are all locked together, in one cause—in common cares, hopes, offices and duties; for their honor and dishonor, their sustenance, their ambition, all their objects are common. So they are trained of necessity to a kind of general working, or co-operation, and, like stones rolled together in some brook or eddy, they wear each other into common shapes. If the family subsist by plunder, then the infant is swaddled as a thief, the child wears a thief's garments and feeds the growth of his body on stolen meat; and, in due time, he will have the trade upon him, without ever knowing that he has taken it up, or when he took it up. If the father is intemperate, the children must go on errands to procure his supplies, lose the shame that might be their safety, be immersed in the fumes of liquor; in going and coming, and why not rewarded by an occasional taste of what is so essential to the enjoyment of life? If the family subsist in idleness and beggary, then the children will be trained to lie skillfully and maintain their false pretences with a plausible effrontery—all this, you will observe, not as a sin, but as a trade.

Nor does what I am saying hold, only in cases of extreme viciousness and depravity. Whatever fire the fathers kindle, the children are always found gathering the wood—always helping as accessaries and apprentices. If the father reads a newspaper, or a sporting gazette on Sunday, the family must help him find it. If he writes a letter of business on Sunday, he will send his child to the office with the letter. If the mother is a scandal-monger, she will make her children spies and eaves-droppers. If she sends word to her servant to say, at the door, she is not at home, she will sometimes send it by her child. If she is ambitious that her children should excel in a display of finery and fashion, they must wear the show and grow up in the spirit of it. If her house is a den of disorder and filth, they must be at home in it. Fretfulness and ill-temper in the parents are provocations and, therefore, somewhat more efficacious than commandments to the same. The proper result will be a congenial assem-

blage, in the house, of petulance and ill nature. The niggardly parsimony, that quarrels with a child, when asking for a book needful for his proficiency at school, is teaching him that money is worth more than knowledge. If the parents are late risers, the children must not disturb the house, but stay quiet and take a lesson, that is to assist their energy and promptness, in the future business of life. If they go to church only half of the day, they will not send their children the other half. If they never read the bible, they will never teach it. If they laugh at religion, they will put a face upon it, which will make their children justify the contempt they express. This enumeration might be indefinitely extended. Enough that we see, in the working of the house, how all the members work together. The children fall into their places naturally, as it were, and unconsciously, to do and to suffer exactly what the general scheme of the house requires. Without any design to that effect, all the actings of business, pleasure and sin, propagate themselves throughout the circle, as the weights of a clock maintain the working of the wheels. Where there is no effort to teach wrong or thought of it, the house is yet a school of wrong, and the life of the house is only a practical drill in evil.

A CHAPTER ON PREACHING.

BY HENRY WARE, JUN., D. D.

A reflecting Christian often wonders at the apparently trifling efficacy of religious institutions; he perplexes himself to comprehend how it is that such multitudes hear preaching, and yet so few profit by it. A yet greater wonder is it at times, that he himself should be so little the better for his attendance on services, of whose value he thinks himself deeply sensible. The minister occasionally tries to explain the matter in a sermon; but his explanation is only partially satisfactory; what seem to him the chief causes do not appear such to men in more exposed walks of life, and the speculations of different active men on the subject differ as much as their various personal experience. Some ascribe it to the weakness of the preachers, and some to the inattention of the hearers; some to internal and some to external causes; and many, in striving to satisfy their minds on the point, forget to keep a watch over the only causes which are of any moment to themselves.

It is not strange therefore, that when Mr. Herton had preached a sermon from the text, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard," there was a good deal of speculation among his hearers as to the justness of his views. Some thought that he refined too much, some that he was not sufficiently discriminating, some that he made too much of faith, some that he was not sufficiently practical, and some that he did not make allowance for the hindrances which the world throws in the way of piety. So they began at the church door, and as the several parties separated on their way home, they carried on the discussion. If it be one aim of a preacher to make people think, he certainly had hit the mark that once at least.

As no one in the parish lived further from church than David Ellington, it happened that those who walked the same road with him, kept up the discourse during the whole distance; and he had an opportunity to hear opinions on all the different points that were started. When this had been done and neighbour after neighbour had dropped away each at his own threshold, Jane turned to her husband, and said, "So,—if we may trust what we have been hearing on all sides, preaching does no good, and yet nobody is to blame for it."

"Except the minister," replied David.

"Nay," said his wife, "even Dr. Pillerton, who spoke most harshly, acknowledged

that, after all, the preacher does enough to be the making of any man who would take heed to his words. So that, for aught I see, the minister also is free from blame, like every body else; and we have only to wonder how this dreadful waste of religious influences is to be accounted for."

"And yet meantime nothing is more easily accounted for, if you will take it up in single cases and examine them one by one. Men are puzzled, because they want to see through all Christendom at once; but they will find there is no puzzle at all, if they will just sit down and each decide his own case. Describe to me any man's life, and I will tell you at once why it is that preaching does him no good."

While he was saying this, neighbour Smith, who had been walking ahead of our carpenter and his family, and now that none else was in their company desired to join himself to them, had turned back and caught the last sentence. He too had evidently been musing on the topic of the day, and gave vent to his feelings by exclaiming bitterly, "I don't believe that it does anybody any good."

"Why, Mr. Smith," exclaimed Jane, "you speak as if you had received a personal affront."

"Then I am sure I ask pardon," said John; "I spoke quick, to be sure, because I had been trying to make it out straight all the way, and I can't do it. I don't see why preaching should not do good, and yet I'm sure it never did any good to me, and I do not see it does much good any where. Now take this very town and go over it from one end to the other, and count the people on your fingers, and consider —"

David interrupted him. "That's the very reason you get so puzzled; you undertake too much; you would explain the case of a thousand people at once, when perhaps you are hardly able to explain one. Let us take one at a time. Let us begin with John Smith; and when we understand his case, we will go to his next neighbour, David Ellington, and sift him; and so on, from door to door."

"Well," said John, "it's chiefly my own case that I care about, and that makes me feel so bad. I don't know that all the sermons I ever heard have done me the least good in the world."

"Very well;—now the question is, why? Is it because the sermons were poor and unable to do good?"

"I cannot say that of all of them; some poor preaching I have heard, and I have heard some very fine preaching that was worse than the poor; but on the whole, there has been more that was good. And that in fact makes the difficulty;—sermons are very excellent, for the most part, very,—and yet they don't make me any better."

"Then we must seek another cause. I had a neighbour once, who possessed a comfortable house, and a capital lot of ground to till—orchard, mowing ground, cattle, and a wife who was an admirable dairy-woman. There was not a man in the town with a better opportunity to lead a thrifty, forehanded, prosperous life. What was the reason that he did not? People wondered, when they looked at his fine farm, why in the world it was that the poor man was always behind-hand and going down hill. What was the reason? It could not be the farm—what was it?"

John did not answer, for he more than suspected that his friend was beginning to make a parable out of his own history.

"No," continued David, "it was not the farm that was in fault, but the farmer; he did not use his opportunities, he neglected his land, he lounged about doing nothing, and talked, and smoked, and drank; and as he grew poorer every year, he kept wondering how it could be, that so fine a farm would not support him in plenty and ease."

"He found out at last," whispered John.

"Yes, he found out at last; and then what did he do? He just attended to his business—gave up idle and dissipated habits, and minded his farm; and then he had no difficulty in winning from it a handsome support. Now you are doing with preaching just as you used to do with your farm—neglecting

it; and how in the world can you expect it to do you good? How can you be so foolish as to be surprised you have no grain to reap and no abundance on your board, when you have not sowed the seed, nor tilled the crop?"

"But that is not quite fair," replied John; "I do not neglect preaching; there is not a man in the village more constant at meeting than I am."

"Just as you used to live on your farm,—always at home, never away from the homestead; but that availed nothing, while you were an idler. And so in this case,—of what use to be at church, if you do nothing more? Sitting there and taking into your ears the voice of the preacher, is no better than sitting by your back door and musing on the beauty and fertility of your lands. Nothing can grow up in either case, if this is all you do."

"But that is not all I do."

"Perhaps not quite; you used to go out to work sometimes, and plough and hoe a little, just enough to keep off actual starvation; and about as much as this you do in religion. But suppose you were to make a business of it, as you did of your farm when you took the right turn; suppose you were now to make the most of these religious means, as resolutely as you did of your goodly lands,—do you think you should find reason to complain any longer that you get no good from them?"

They walked on for some moments in silence. John was evidently getting a little new light on the dark subject, which inclined him more to muse than to speak. But he presently felt the silence to be growing awkward, and he therefore broke it, somewhat at a venture, by saying, that after all he did not perceive that he was so very negligent; he could not see but that he did as much as other men.

"As other men!" cried David; "there is the rock on which so many are lost; they compare themselves to 'other men.' But you have already said, that they are not profited by preaching; how then can their case be any guide to you? It only shows how they are lost, not how you may be saved. Look to yourself for the present. One at a time as I said before. Let us settle the case of John Smith, before we undertake any other. And now, to begin at the beginning, let us just remember what preaching is for. Is it to be listened to, or to be practised upon?"

"To be practised upon, certainly."

"Very well; which do you do? You listen; but do not practise?"

"Why, there now," said Smith, "that is the very thing I am lamenting,—that I do listen, and yet my practice is not affected."

"To be sure," said David; "you expect the practice to come of itself; you take pains to go and hear, which is the least part of the business, and take no pains to return and act accordingly, which is the essential thing. You think this is to come of itself; just as you used to fancy that looking at your fine farm, and talking and boasting about it, would do as well as working upon it. You recollect what we were saying the other Saturday evening about the improvement of that season? Well, you acknowledge that it never occurred to you to use it as a preparation for public worship. The same of Sunday morning. Without any preparation, then, you go to church and hear the sermon. How? that you may learn something? that you may receive some wholesome advice? that you may be raised to a better way of living? No, you merely hear. You just sit and listen;—in at one ear and out at the other, as the saying is. Do you think about it afterward, musing on its truths, try to recall and re-impress its doctrine, and turn its advice into real practical rules? I suppose you never pretended to do this. You have not dreamt of anything more, than just to hear the sermon. So it is with thousands; therefore no wonder that they are none the better. It would be a wonder indeed if they were. Why, the plain fact is, neighbour Smith, that you and they are doing all you can to prevent preaching from doing any good. If the devil had hired you to help him defeat