

The King's Highway

Rev. L. K. Mullen, Nov. 5

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PARENTAL GOVERNMENT

By Dr. A. M. Hills in "P. H. Advocate"

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Young parents, watch with prayerful diligence the first stirrings of carnality in your high chairs and cradles, and see to it that your children submit to parental authority. The child that does not obey an earthly father will not obey the Father in heaven.

"A bishop then (preacher) must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour . . . One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" (I Tim. 3:2-5).

God forbid that I should assume any great superiority over my brethren. We know it is a thankless job to give unasked advice. But when a man has become a great-grandfather, it may be pardonable to assume that one has learned some lessons by experience and observation, the importance of which younger people do not quite appreciate. I will begin with a brief chapter of personal experience. Just about fifty years ago, I came home one Sunday evening from preaching service five miles out in the country, and was called to supper. Probably I was cold and hungry, and might have been, if ever, a little inclined to overlook a breach of customary childish behaviour. My first-born son was by my side in his high chair, and his sister, fifteen months older, was in another by the side of her mother.

As usual I tapped on the table for the little ones to put their heads down while the blessing was asked. Nellie's head was bowed and eyes closed, but Merritt held his head up with eyes open. I spoke to him about it, "Merritt, will you put your head down?" "No sir." It was the first time anything like it had ever occurred. "Merritt, will you be a good boy and close your eyes while the blessing is asked?" "No sir." I turned his chair about face to the wall, tapped on the table, and with Nellie's eyes closed, the blessing was asked. I pleaded with the little boy, but only got, "No sir," for a reply. I saw that he understood what he was doing, and that his will had come up consciously in opposition to mine. I finally told him that Papa would rather go without many meals than to have him lose one; but he could not have another meal in the home until he put his head down, closed his eyes, and said "Amen."

I fussed with him till I had to go to church to preach the evening sermon. My faithful wife kept up the battle till nearly nine o'clock. At last the little boy submitted, and said, "Mamma, I can be a good boy. Tell Papa I can be a good boy, and will be a good boy, and say 'Amen.'" The first battle was won toward his conversion, which

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took place when he was nine years old.

A few months later than that first instance, a little girl, older than my children, was playing with them, and said repeatedly, "I shan't do it." He found out what it meant, and repeated it to his parents. I read to him the story of Eli and what came because he did not govern his sins; and I told my precious little boy that if he said, "I shan't do it" again to his father or mother, I should punish him. The result was that I punished him every day for nine days "till he learned obedience by the things he suffered."

I once told these facts in a sermon, and a mother in the audience told the pastor that she had no use for me, and it was cruel the way I treated my little boy! I asked if she had any boys. The pastor said, "She has three—one has served a term in prison and the other two are the most lawless, immoral scamps in this town." On the other hand, I governed my boys, and all of them grew up to be Christian men, one a preacher, and two Bible class teachers, and two daughters are church officials.

The reader will judge whose method was cruel, that woman's or mine. I maintain that it is wickedly cruel to leave children ungoverned.

Now, with this start, I come to my theme—the profound importance of holiness people governing their children. By observation and reflection I am led to the serious conclusion that a vast number of holiness people have a mistaken notion of what sanctification is and how it ought to behave itself in the presence of wilful evil conduct on the part of their own children.

I am led to believe many of them think sanctification absolutely rules out even the possibility of righteous indignation at evil conduct in their children, and that their children will not think them sanctified if they display any holy wrath at their abhorrent wickedness. I flatly deny that there is any such conception of sanctification taught us in the entire Word of God.

It is not the kind of holiness that Jesus had. When Jesus saw that a lot of rascally Jews had converted his Father's temple into a reeking stable and a den of thieves, he braided a whip and lashed them out and upset their tables of money; and we may be sure his eyes flamed with indignation, and there was no silly grin on his face while he did it!

If our holiness people get the absurd notion that sanctification compels them to wear an imperturbable, goody-goody, senseless smile on their faces, while their children are breaking the laws, disgracing the church, and insulting God, and that there is no justice in the family government nor parental discipline, depend upon it, they will develop normal hoodlums right at the family altar, and train their own children to be gospel-hardened candidates for damnation.

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