

"AS BECOMETH WOMEN PROFESSING GODLINESS."

– (No. 1.) –

The thought has recently been suggesting itself, that as the sphere of Christian women differs somewhat from that of our brethren, a few observations in the TOWER bearing upon the duties, privileges and obligations of Christian women, and how we may best fulfill our mission might prove beneficial and helpful.

The sphere of Christian women is by no means a narrow one, as many seem to regard it; and if we would properly fulfill our mission, it behooves us as members of the Church of Christ, and in the earthly relationships of wives, mothers, daughters and sisters, as well as neighbors and friends, to consider it with care in the light of the divine revelation and particularly in the light of our present position as the prospective heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. As stewards of God we all have some of his goods – some talents – however great or small, entrusted to our care. And if we would be wise stewards and meet the Master's approval when we come to render up our accounts, we must study the best ways and means for investing our talents so as to have them yield the largest possible increase.

A merchant who simply invests his capital, be it large or small, in business, and pays no further attention to it, will never succeed. If he would be successful he must study to learn the best possible ways of turning everything to account. So must we do if we would be faithful stewards of God.

As members of the church, we, in common with our brethren, are even now privileged to be co-workers together with our Lord and Head. The question therefore naturally arises first of all, What department of Christian work may properly engage the activities of Christian women?

To rightly judge of the matter we need first to observe the natural position to which God has assigned woman; and secondly to inquire whether the new relationship into which we are called as members of the church of Christ, in any degree modifies our duties and responsibilities under the natural order. Let us therefore first consider the divine order of headship as expressed by the Apostle Paul – 1 Cor. 11:3.

THE DIVINE ORDER OF HEADSHIP.

"I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." – 1 Cor. 11:3.

The Apostle Paul here uses the human body as an illustration of God's order and arrangement among his intelligent creatures. The symbol is an apt one, and [R1075 : page 7] suggestive of perfect harmony. The head is the director and care-taker of the body; every interest of the body is taken into consideration by the head, and every possible provision made and applied to meet those interests. And in turn, the members of the body are always at the prompt and willing service of the head. And such is the sympathy between the various members that if one is disabled the other members, are ever on the alert to execute the plans devised by the head for its recovery.

The headship of Jehovah was expressed to Adam in his perfect condition in Eden, when God said: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die." (Gen. 2:16,17, – margin.) Here was an expression of Jehovah's rightful authority, his loving care and generous provision – his headship. Man in turn should have expected to reverence, respect and obey the authority, to reciprocate the love, and to gratefully accept and enjoy Jehovah's bounty. In the obedience expected, the idea of base servility was absent. Love commanded, and love should have delighted in obedience.

Even Christ Jesus, highly exalted as he is, delights to acknowledge the headship of Jehovah, saying, "My Father is greater than I;" "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." And again: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psa. 40:8). In harmony with this thought of the headship of Jehovah, the prophet Isaiah represents Christ as the "Arm of Jehovah" (Isa. 53:1; 59:16), and in obedience to Jehovah's will he was active, prompt and willing, even unto death. Thus our Lord set us an example of the true relationship which should exist between himself as head and the members of his body.

Since Christ has redeemed mankind from death, all judgment, authority and power is given unto him. The office of the head is now vested in him; hence Paul declares: The head of man is Christ. And whatever is implied by this term in expressing the relationship between our Lord Jesus and Jehovah, his head, is also implied in that relationship between Christ and man. He, then, who would be perfect, must find his chief delight in learning and doing the will of Christ, even as Christ Jesus delights to do the will of Jehovah. It should be his constant aim to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5) And to do the will of Christ is to do the will of Jehovah; because the will of Christ is to do Jehovah's will.

The next step in God's order indicated by the Apostle, is, man the head of woman; or as shown in Eph. 5:23, the husband the head of the wife. Many who see clearly the headship of Jehovah, and the headship of Christ, fail to see the headship of man in the domestic relation. Prejudice, public sentiment and the abuse of power, have made this and similar expressions of the faithful Apostle quite unpopular. And this is not surprising, in the present fallen and disordered condition of humanity. Because of his teaching on this subject, the Apostle Paul is variously charged with being a despiser of women, and as speaking without divine authority; and this even among Christians. But when rightly viewed, Paul, as usual, is found to give faithful expression to

the divine order dictated by unerring wisdom for the highest good and happiness of all.

If the husband is the head of the wife, it implies exactly the same responsibilities on the part of each as named above. The husband should be the protector, provider and director in the affairs of life, and the wife the cheerful, willing co-worker in harmony with his will. He, therefore, who would assume the position of husband, should see that he is capable and willing to fill it after the divine pattern; and she who would become a man's partner in life, should see that she is ready to fill such position according to the divine arrangement.

Yes, says some dear sister, that would all do very well if men were perfect, but we know that it not unfrequently happens that the wife has more ability and judgment to act as head than the husband. That is doubtless true in many cases, but that should be considered before such contracts are made. If unhappily it has not been considered in time, such wives should make the best of the situation and quietly assist in the office of head, with as much modesty, and as little appearance of doing so, as the circumstances will admit. It also happens, says another, that the husband's will often runs counter to the Lord's will; how then? We answer, If the husband is consecrated to the Lord, and yet his will appears to be out of harmony with the Lord's will, he will be very ready, either to *prove* his course to be in harmony with the Lord's will or to change it. And here we see the wisdom which dictates that we should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). But if such contracts have been formed before we became consecrated believers, we must bear in mind that our first responsibility is now to our Lord, our Heavenly Bridegroom. The worldly husband is not the head of his wife as a "new creature" espoused to Christ. Her first allegiance, is, therefore, to her real though invisible Lord, but *in so far as may be consistent with this new relationship* she should endeavor to fulfill the old also – a thing not possible in every respect. For one of those consecrated to God as living sacrifices to thereafter become unequally yoked with one of the

world's children, is to violate the direct command of God (2 Cor. 6:14), and to take a long step toward ignoring union with Christ, "for what communion hath light with darkness?" The children of this world strive for the things of this world and delight in the world's approval, while the consecrated child of God has renounced all these and should be striving only to obtain those things which are beyond and entirely unknown to the world. But if both are united *in the Lord*, studying to know and do his will, and walking after the Spirit, to do the will of the consecrated husband is to do the will of Christ.

The consecrated wife sustains the same relation to the consecrated husband that the husband sustains to Christ, and that Christ sustains to God who is head over all. Should submission on the part of any be regarded as mere servility? By no means. Christ did not so regard it; why should we? There is neither servility nor tyranny where love rules. Love is neither boastful of its authority nor ashamed of its submission. The true Christian husband will delight to honor the wife as the weaker vessel, and the wife will reverence her husband. The wife will look up with a lawful pride in her husband's manly strength and goodness, while he will regard with admiration and affection her womanly grace. If the relationship between husband and wife in the divine order stands thus, it cannot be true as some claim that man and woman are exact equals in every respect. They are not equal in all respects, but each possesses and should recognize those qualities of heart and mind which make them companions for each other. Under such circumstances the wife will be subject to the husband because she recognizes such to be the divine arrangement for their mutual good; and further, because it will be her delight to serve for love's sake. And the husband will delight to honor and bless the wife. **[R1076 : page 7]**

God never makes one the head over another exact equal. Jehovah is superior to Christ, Christ superior to man, and man superior to woman, the weaker vessel. Man's superiority consists mainly in his greater strength, both physical and mental. These various steps are in

God's order. True, in the present fallen, imperfect condition, many women are superior to many men, but such women should be very sure not to become wives of such men; for in so doing they must either violate the divine order (Eph. 5:22), or else submit themselves to an inferior which is also out of harmony with the Lord's design.

When after the fall God said to Eve, "Thy husband shall rule over thee," some claim that he there established domestic slavery. Truly domestic slavery has followed; but God did not establish it. Man, created to bless by his power to rule, too often falls into the error of tyrannical misrule, and the desire of the wife toward her husband – for his love, appreciation and approval – alas, too often ends in bitter disappointment just as God foretold.

In view of these considerations, let us note the instruction of the Apostle Paul, and see that its object is the very same as that contemplated in the union of the first perfect pair in Eden: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the Savior [preserver, care-taker] of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word [the truth]: that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies" (Eph. 5:22-28). Children may then obey both parents, since each will be in harmony with the other and with the Lord.

In recognition of the same principle, the headship of man, Paul further states: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over man, but to be quiet" (1 Tim. 2:12). Surely Paul does not mean that a woman's lips must be forever sealed that she may not declare the good tidings of great joy to others. Does not the same Apostle say:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus. And does not the prophet Isaiah teach that all the anointed, are anointed to preach the good tidings. It is in harmony with these, then, that we must understand the above words of the Apostle.

His idea, therefore, seems to be, that in no case, however important the truth we are commissioned to bear, is woman to assume a position of authority or headship over man. She may tell the blessed tidings of great joy and teach the principles of truth anywhere and everywhere, and to whomsoever she has opportunity; but always with becoming modesty, stating the truth so clearly that *of itself* it may carry conviction with it and her own individuality be lost sight of. This element of character is one which naturally belongs to woman, but is generally very soon lost by those who attempt to work in a public way. The work for the majority of women is the individual, quiet and none the less effective work. Her greatest influence is that exerted strictly within her divinely appointed sphere. If necessity, opportunity, and ability should indicate a more public sphere of usefulness, she may fill it as long as such *necessity* and opportunity lasts, if in so doing, she bears that modest, quiet demeanor, in action, word, and apparel, which becometh women professing Godliness. By emphasizing necessity, we mean that *never* should she seek or prefer publicity to the less obtrusive and equally effective ways of making her influence felt for truth and righteousness. It is the assumption of authority and dictatorship, which is so unbecoming.

Again, we see that in this relationship of husband and wife, is prefigured the beautiful relationship between Christ Jesus and the church. And as in the type, so in the antitype, the church, the bride of Christ is to be subject unto him in everything; earnestly seeking at all times to know, and then delighting to do his will. As the woman is not to assume authority and direct her husband, so the church is not to assume authority and to attempt to direct the Lord's work, but is to be

"quiet," searching diligently to know his plan and methods, and then endeavoring faithfully to execute them.

When God's plan shall be brought fully into execution, we see that loving authority and joyful submission will fill the universe with blessed peace and everlasting joy – and "God shall be all in all" – Head over all – his will done in earth as it is done in heaven. (1 Cor. 15:28.) Seeing this to be God's ultimate design, it should be our endeavor, so far as it is in our power, to carry out and illustrate that purpose now. It can only be fully illustrated, however, by those who are "united in the Lord." The covering of the head by the woman (1 Cor. 11:10), signifies submission to authority; a recognition of God's order of headship. It symbolizes the relationship between the church and her head, Christ Jesus. The same thing was illustrated in the attire of the priesthood: the high-priest wore a mitre or crown and the under-priests (representatives of the church, the bride), wore "bonnets" or head coverings, indicating that they were not the head but *under authority* to the Chief-Priest.

The Apostle's high regard for woman and woman's work is shown by his mention of several faithful co-laborers and helpers among them – see Rom. 16:1-6,13; also Phil. 4:3: "I entreat thee... help those women which labored with me in the gospel...whose names are in the book of life." And Acts 1:14: "All continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women." And 1 Cor. 11:5: "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth [teacheth]."

These scriptures show that women did a work in the Apostles' days which was approved and appreciated by them and by the Lord. Yet women usually spoke only at the smaller gatherings; and when Paul said, "Let the women keep silence in the congregations," he probably had reference to the public gatherings at which it was the custom to have more or less debating. In these public debates, Paul **[R1076 : page 8]** thought a woman's voice would be out of place, and this is the opinion of most thinking men and women to-day,

though it has by many been carried to an extreme, forbidding them to pray or teach on any occasion, even in more private assemblies of Christians; which certainly is an error.

When Paul urged that the women keep silence in the churches, and if they would learn anything to inquire of their husbands at home, he must be understood as referring to a principle to be observed only so far as practicable – and possibly to curb some unwomanly women who were a disturbing element in the church then. To rigidly apply the rule would do violence to the general spirit of Paul's teaching. Where the spirit of Christ is there is liberty – not liberty to violate God's law and order as expressed both in nature and Revelation, but liberty to progress and to grow in grace and knowledge under the wholesome restraints of God's law and established order.

Because God has arranged that the man and woman are representative of Christ and his bride, the church, probably this is one reason that men have always been given the more active and public work of the ministry, and women the work of assisting and the more private teaching, which is equally acceptable to God. So Christ is the active agent in carrying out God's plan. He is the great minister of all, and we as his Church are permitted to be helps meet for his use: to do an humbler part, and yet an acceptable part, well pleasing to God.

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