

## "BE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED."

TO the consecrated who are not yoked – who are unmarried – the Apostle Paul gives the advice that, for the full accomplishment of their consecration vow to the Lord, such have a position of very superior advantage. (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 7:25-40.) But the advice to remain unmarried, he would have us understand, is not imperative. (1 Cor. 7:35,36.) None are forbidden to marry; and false teachers who have since arisen, *forbidding* to marry, are condemned as seriously out of order. (1 Tim. 4:1-3.) This prohibition by Papacy upon its priesthood has brought upon it one of the foulest stains that have blackened its baneful history. Marriage is still honorable (Heb. 13:4) when the relationship is sustained in purity and holiness, as God designed; when two are equally yoked, and their hearts beat to the music of a single high and holy purpose; whether that purpose be on the natural plane to increase the race and to bring up posterity in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Gen. 1:28; Eph. 6:4), or, on the spiritual plane, to toil together as true yoke-fellows for the spiritual family of God.

Yet, with very rare exceptions, the *consecrated* can best fulfil their covenant by walking alone with God, having only his preferences to consult in every matter, and entirely untrammelled by domestic cares. Such was Paul's judgment; and such has been the testimony of thousands, who forgot to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and to commit their way unto the Lord before they became entangled in multiplied cares and hampered by the outcome of their own misguided course. – Eccl. 12:1; Psa. 37:5; Prov. 3:5,6.

The words of 1 Tim. 5:14 were not respecting the young sisters who were consecrated to the Lord, but in harmony with the context (verses 3-16) were spoken with reference to young

widows of the Church in general who should not be made financial burdens to the Church. Any such, not of those consecrated as living sacrificers, but yet believers, of the household of faith, let them marry, etc. Thus seen, this scripture is in harmony with the general teaching of the New Testament.

Of God's consecrated children, whom alone we address, only a small minority are yet in youth, and disentangled from the cares of this life. But to all such we have no other advice to commend than that of the inspired Apostle [R1554 : page 213] cited above. We would only add, Be not unmindful of your privileges; make good use of your stewardship; run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, our glorious Bridegroom, for all needed grace and fellowship; and be faithful unto death and in due time ye shall reap a glorious reward, if ye faint not. "Forget also thine own people and thy father's house [earthly fellowships]: so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty [of character]; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." – Psa. 45:10,11.

These remarks, however, do not apply to the world, nor are they *imperative* upon the saints. The recommendation is one of expediency – to facilitate both individual progress and the progress of the general work of the Lord, and is parallel to the Lord's teaching in Matt. 19:12. Let those of the world marry, and fill the honorable positions in the world of faithful, devoted husbands and wives and parents; and let the influence of prosperous and happy homes reach as far as possible toward ameliorating the unhappy conditions of the wretched and homeless. The special advice of the Apostle is only for those consecrated to be *living sacrifices*, wholly devoted to the Master's use, and awaiting his exceeding great reward.

But to those of the consecrated who already are unequally yoked, and hampered by many cares, and vexed with many

perplexing problems, we would say, Take courage! he who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, and thus directed your steps into the narrow way that leads to glory, honor and immortality, knew how difficult that way would be to you under your present circumstances; and his call implies his willingness to accept you, as well as your ability to make your calling and election sure, through his abounding grace. Nevertheless, as the Apostle forewarned, such shall have trouble in the flesh. – 1 Cor. 7:28.

Remembering the Apostle's teaching that the believing husband is not to put away his unbelieving wife, nor the believing wife to leave the unbelieving husband, but rather to seek to establish peace (1 Cor. 7:10-16; also Matt. 19:3-10. – *Diaglott*), we see with what carefulness the consecrated believer must walk before God and before the unequally yoked life-companion. What humility it will require, and what patient endurance of many trials. But yet, beloved ones, so tried, let patience have her perfect work, and in due time you shall come out of the furnace purified. Study to let the beauty of holiness be manifest; and if it does not convert the companion, it will at least be a testimony against him or her, and the sanctifying effect will not be lost on children and neighbors; and the praise will be to God.

Let such a wife carefully perform the duties of a wife and respect the relationship of a husband, even if she is forced to lose a large measure of respect for her husband; and let such a husband carefully perform the duties of a husband, even if the treadmill of domestic life has become a painful one. It may be, O man, that thou mayst save thy wife; or, wife, that thou mayst save thy husband. "But if the *unbelieving* depart, let him [or her] depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases." – 1 Cor. 7:15.

But one cause is mentioned in the Scriptures as a proper ground for the dissolution of the marriage bond. (Matt. 19:3-10.) And the disciples, hearing these our Master's words, were as much surprised as the Pharisees, and said that if the case stood thus – *i.e.*, if the marriage covenant was so binding and indissoluble, it would be better not to marry – it would be too great a risk to run, (Verse 10.) But this is just the way the Lord would have us view the relationship. The marriage contract is one that should stand until death makes the separation, unless the one cause referred to releases the innocent from the guilty and faithless. The twain bound for life by mutual contract, are thereafter no longer twain, but one flesh; and all their future happiness and prosperity in the present life depend upon their loyalty, generosity, love and consideration one for the other.

The marriage relation, both in its duration and in its character, was designed to be a type of the lasting, faithful and blessed union of Christ and the Church. He will never leave her nor forsake her; and she will never withdraw her allegiance and faithfulness to him. But as Christ permits those who choose, to forsake **[R1554 : page 214]** him, so if the unbeliever depart from the believer, let him or her depart. The believing one if once deserted by the unbeliever would not be bound to receive the deserter back again to marriage fellowship – although upon evidence of proper reform it might be well to be reconciled – but he or she would be bound not to marry another so long as the first companion lives. (1 Cor. 7:11.) Unfaithfulness to marriage vows would include, on the husband's part, a failure to provide, so far as possible, for his wife's necessities, and would be *desertion*, even though he should desire to stay with her and have her support him. Of course in a case of the husband's sickness, and inability to provide, the wife's duty according to the marriage covenant would be to spend herself to the last, in his support.

Whatever may be the world's ideas with reference to the privileges and obligations of the marriage relationship (and alas! they are far from purity and righteousness, making it very generally but "an occasion to the flesh"), those who are united in the Lord should remember the Apostle's counsel, "Walk in the spirit [or mind of Christ], and ye shall not fulfil the desires of the flesh; for the desires of the flesh are contrary to the spirit, and the spirit contrary to the flesh." – Gal. 5:16,17.

But all the married saints are not married in the Lord, and hence many are obliged to consider the human aspect of that relationship, and to devote themselves measurably to its earthly objects and aims, viz., the increase of posterity, and their care and training; such obligation being implied in the marriage contract, from which a subsequent consecration to the Lord grants no release. Mutual obligations are accepted **[R1555 : page 214]** in marriage from which there can be no departure except by *mutual consent*. The Apostle's advice on this subject is very clear, and in perfect accord with what we have just seen respecting the mutual obligations of the married (1 Cor. 7:1-9); and the due benevolence and continence counseled on the part of both should obviate any necessity for domestic imposition and consequent discord, and should insure harmony on the firm foundation of mutual love and respect. But blessed are those who are able and willing to keep the fleshly desire under full control, and to walk in the spirit. "He that is able [both from his own disposition and from his circumstances] to receive [this teaching], let him receive it." – Matt. 19:12.

As some of the Lord's dear people come thus to view and consider the sacredness of the contract into which so many of them have entered, perhaps they will begin to see how they can glorify God more in their domestic life than they have hitherto thought possible. Indeed, it will be strange if all cannot see wherein they can improve upon the past. Is it not the case

sometimes that brethren and sisters whose souls have been refreshed by the truth have zealously borne it to others, and have taken for granted that husband or wife would not be interested?

Some husbands think of their wives as too busy with domestic cares to be interested in the Truth; or too worldly, or too fearful of the reproaches of the world, to have anything to do with it: and so leave them, and bear the truth to others. But is this doing a husband's part? A true husband is a provider, and his care should include provision of spiritual as well as natural food and raiment for his wife and family. Hence on learning the truth his first endeavor should be to serve it also to his help-mate. Should he come home in the evening and find her occupied with family cares – preparing and clearing away the evening meal, looking after the little ones and arranging for the necessities of the coming day, etc. – long after the hours of his working day are past, and leave her to bear these domestic cares alone, and to feel neglected and underrated, a mere household accommodation, instead of a worthy and honored companion, while he seeks a quiet nook to read, or goes out alone to bear the message of salvation and joy to neighbors or others?

Ah, no! Let charity *begin at home*. If an unwise course in the past has overwhelmed the wife with family cares too numerous for her to bear with easy grace, see that no more are added, but, instead, "put your shoulder to the wheel" and help her with them as much as possible. What if tending the babies and washing the dishes is woman's work! if she has too much of it to do to admit of an hour's leisure with you, **[R1555 : page 215]** or with the Lord, or with the study of his Truth for herself – or if, under the pressure of constant duties, she has lost all relish for intellectual culture, and much of her faith in spiritual realities – it will do you good to share these tasks with her, until you have tied the last knot of the day's duties, and can then sit down together to study the Truth.

As gradually she comes to realize your love and interest she will have the more respect for you and for the doctrines whose fruit she sees exemplified in your daily life. At first, if this is a new thing, she may regard it as only a little unusual freak; but, by and by, constancy will increase confidence, and a responsive chord will be found in her heart; and the soil, thus carefully plowed and prepared, will be mellow and ready for the seeds of truth, and you and she and the home will be blessed. Try it brethren – any of you who find you have been to any extent remiss in these matters in the past. And in writing to the WATCH TOWER office mention your wife or your husband, if interested in the Truth.

Sometimes it is the wife who first catches a glimpse of the Millennial dawn, and she should value her opportunities for bearing to her husband the favors of which she has been made a partaker, although the outlook for his conversation to it may not seem very hopeful. Often, when the husband learns of his wife's departure from the beaten track of so-called orthodoxy, he forthwith concludes it is some new fanaticism; and seals up his heart and closes his ears to it. What should she do in such a case? Force it on him? No: that might only arouse antagonism. She should first of all let him read it in the living epistle of her daily life. Let him see the good effects of the truth in your carefulness to make home pleasant; let him realize your sympathy with his trials and vexations, your helpfulness to the extent of ability, and your appreciation of all his kindness.

It may sometimes require long and patient preaching of this kind before the husband is attracted to the plan of the ages; but let the light of a holy life and of a consistent walk and conversation continue to shine, while you in various ways hold forth to him the word of life, and in due time a response will be manifest. Let not such wives make the mistake of ignoring the headship of the husband (even though they be better informed

concerning the divine plan), in appropriating the home of which he is the acknowledged head to the service of the Lord for the assemblies of the saints, if he is opposed to so using it, or in other ways. Even if the home is the wife's property a deference is due to the husband's wishes as the head of the house, *so long as the relationship is recognized*; his responsibility is to God, whether he recognizes that responsibility or not. But a wife is not bound to continue to supply a home; and should cease to do so if she be denied reasonable privileges in it, since in so doing she would be encouraging a wrong. As before shown, if a husband possesses the health, etc., necessary to the support of his wife and family and fails to provide for them, he has proved unfaithful to his marriage vow, which was to nourish and care for his companion; and in the eyes of the civil law he has committed "*constructive desertion*." A wife so circumstanced may, if she choose, consider herself as *literally* deserted, and may refuse to entertain and support such deserter. But desertion would not grant the right to either party to remarry so long as the other lives.

As the head of the domestic arrangement it is the duty of the Christian husband to say, "As for me and my house [as far as lies in the power of my influence], we will serve the Lord." And the Christian wife, recognizing this responsibility on his part, will gladly co-operate, in so far as she can conscientiously do so; and will put no stumbling block in his way, although she may view his methods differently. She may carefully endeavor to convince him of the truth, but she may not interfere with his conscience or his responsibility to God. Nor should the husband's course with the wife be arbitrary and unreasoning. He should not disregard her conscience, to hinder the full and free exercise of all her talents in God's service; but should grant her as great latitude in the use of the home as his conscience and responsibility as the head of the family will permit; for they are "*heirs together* of the grace of life." [R1555 : page 216] If he sees differently he should bring forth his strong reasons for her consideration and possible

approval, and patiently hear her different views, in hope of final harmony. But if harmony cannot be reached, the responsibility for the home and its influence rests with the husband, who, by divine appointment, is its head.

### **HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE.**

In viewing this whole subject we are forcibly reminded of the Apostle's counsel to the entire Church in their individual relationship to the powers that be, which are ordained of God – "Render therefore to all *their dues*; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Owe no man anything, but to love one another." – Rom. 13:7,8.

Peter's counsel is to the same effect – "Honor all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the king." – 1 Pet. 2:17.

Kings are not always personally worthy of honor; but honor is always due to the office, which is "ordained of God." (Rom. 13:1. See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. I., chap. xiii., for the sense and purpose of their ordination.) Many of the magistrates ruling Judea in the days of the Lord and the Apostles were personally very unworthy of honor, yet the Lord and the apostles left us, not only their precepts, but also their example of submission to the authority thus represented: they were all respectful and law-abiding. – Matt. 17:27; Acts 25:8,10,11.

So also in the domestic relation, the office of the husband and father, as the head of the family, is worthy of honor, both from wife and children, and also from the stranger within the gates, enjoying the protection and hospitality of the home. Even if the one so situated be personally unworthy of the honor, it is nevertheless due to his office, on the same principle that honor is due to unworthy civil magistrates.

The Apostle puts these duties of love and honor and custom, etc., in the light of obligations – as debts that should be promptly

paid; saying, Owe no man anything but love. While love would be the ruling principle if all were perfect, yet in the fallen state *selfishness* is the common disease which devours and blights the happiness of home and family and business. True nobility would prompt every man in health to consideration not only toward the weaker sex but toward the aged and infirm of his own sex, in the crowd, in the car, and in any neighborly service; much more in the home and toward the life-companion will consideration be manifested, in the bearing of the cares and burdens of life. And the truly noble man or woman, whether at home or abroad, will be disinclined to disturb or inconvenience anyone; and if such accept a kindness it will be as a favor, and will be amply and graciously acknowledged.

The fall has developed in all selfishness instead of generosity; so that those who desire to be generous, finding selfish ingratitude their **[R1556 : page 216]** principal reward, are often discouraged and consider few if any worthy of it. But Christian men and women are to remember the unselfish example of their great Redeemer, that selfishness lies at the bottom of every sin, and that in striving against sin they must of necessity strive against selfishness, and endeavor to cultivate love. It is as a help to the right course that the Apostle points to *justice* as a consideration for rendering honor, respect and service – honor to whom honor is due, etc.

How beautiful is God's order, and how conducive to lasting peace and happiness to all who faithfully adhere to it! Let us thus carefully distinguish and mark the principles which God has laid down in the Scriptures for our guidance, and his approval will be our exceeding great reward; and his wisdom will by and by be manifest.

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