

WHAT CONSTITUTES TEACHING?

A PLEA FOR THE SISTERS

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

Before entering upon this subject, I wish to apologize for writing at all.

This question with the impression to write has haunted me with great persistence for many weeks and will not be suppressed. I have striven to crush it, to forget it, to relegate it to oblivion, arguing that it in no wise concerns me anyhow: when "Am I my brother's keeper?" seems to ring in my ears, as it were; and it still follows me and will not be side-tracked. I have taken it to the Lord and prayed him to guide my pen.

First – There is a tendency (unconscious, no doubt) among some to make very frequent mention of the subjugation of the wife and the lordship of the husband, enlarging greatly upon these points, but utterly failing (at least in my hearing) to call attention to the duties of the latter, except, indeed, his lordship – always forbearing to point to the command, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church," "giving honor to the wife as the weaker vessel," etc. This one-sided application of Scripture leads a certain type of man, unfortunately not rare, to become a petty tyrant, ever reminding the wife that she must *obey him*, swelling himself that he is lord over somebody, while ignoring entirely his side of the question, degrading her, if she be degradable, into the position of a slave. Having forced her there he ceases to respect her. It is such teaching that is developing men of certain mental calibre (and there are many) into characters such as "Tennessee" describes in his letter in the WATCH TOWER of Nov. 15th.

Lest it be inferred that I have a grievance along the above line, I beg to say I have not. My husband is one of the noblest of Christian gentlemen, fulfilling, it seems to me, as nearly as is possible for fallen humanity, the conditions of a typical head, crowning my life with tenderest love, protection and care.

Second. – All educators, even those of indifferent ability, are well aware of, and appreciate the value of questioning the students (my husband and I were both in this work for upwards of twenty years, he in the medical colleges, I in the public schools), yet in a simple class, which meets for Bible study with the DAWNS or Tabernacle Shadows, never a question is asked a sister. She has toiled, it may be, all the week, Sunday included, at tasks that would appal a masculine mind – washing, ironing, scrubbing, baking, garment-making, cooking for husband and children, half a dozen of the latter, more or less, and a thousand and one other things incidental to housework – with no leisure to read or study, yet when she is privileged to attend a Bible class this important aid is denied her. Never a question to lead her to think, to call out interest, or to draw out her mind and fix her attention. Think of it! No wonder the meeting drags uninterestingly, as one remarked to me.

Pastor Russell, I will not believe, unless I see it over your own signature, that you approve of thus depriving the members (a part of them) of Christ's Body of this valuable aid to gaining knowledge. Personally, it is of little or no consequence to me whether or not I am ever asked a question. I have leisure to think, read, study and pray, and, thank God, always have had, but I plead for those whose hands are fuller and for the principle involved.

Again, lest it be thought that I write as above because I wish for prominence in our meetings or for display of attainments, I beg to state that if I care for those things they are within my reach: it is not necessary to look for them in our little class. I have never

wished for more privileges in the Church than are shown in the Scripture. Never thought a woman should be bishop or deacon; 1 Tim. 1:13 excludes her, also many men. There is likewise something inherent or God-implanted in the nature of womanly women which makes such usurpation repugnant to them. My work in the Church in the past, in which I know I had the Spirit and God's blessing, consisted in taking part in prayer meetings or evangelistic meetings ("praying and [R4121 : page 24] prophesying," as I see it) and teaching in the Sunday Schools.

Hoping attention will be called to the above-mentioned evils,
I am, yours in Christ,

M. E.

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IN REPLY TO THE ABOVE

We must admit that there is much unmanliness and tyranny in some men, and much unwomanliness and tyranny in some women – as results of the fall. Even amongst those favored by the Lord with the High Calling these ignoble qualities are manifest; because God is not calling chiefly the noble, but the mean. *Not many* rich, *not many* wise, *not many* noble hath God chosen, but mainly the mean things to confound the mighty, and things that are naught to bring to naught the things that are prominent. (1 Cor. 1:26-28.) We see the reason to be that the noble and the great usually trust too much in themselves and are unready to implore and accept forgiveness and aid through the only name. Hence the seeing of unmanliness and unwomanliness must not offend us, nor hinder our love for the brethren – for all whom the Lord has called.

But, on the other hand, all those accepted to the School of Christ have the greatest of all teachers, and should become the noblest of the noble in their sentiments; for it is written, "They

shall be all taught of God." These lessons of the Spirit, inculcated through the Word, develop in all the Elect the graces of the holy Spirit, namely, meekness, gentleness, patience, brotherly kindness, love. Some grow these fruits of the Spirit more promptly and more luxuriantly [R4122 : page 24] than others, but all must attain them in heart (and hence, surely, in some good degree outwardly) ere they can be accepted as heirs of the Kingdom. As it is written, they must all be copies of God's dear Son, their Redeemer.

But, how comes it that amongst the more advanced there are sometimes acts, such as are referred to in the letter foregoing, which seem to some to be tyrannical? For instance, the passing by of the sisters in the asking of the Berean Study questions. We suggest that this need not be ascribed to an ignoble motive so long as we can think of a noble one that would meet the conditions. For instance, the leader of the meeting may have had in mind as a God-given rule the Apostle's words, "I suffer not a woman to teach." And possibly he reasoned that to ask a sister a question would be inviting her to teach, and hence be on his part a violation of the apostolic injunction. Possibly he thought that in giving the sisters a chance to answer by saying, "Has *anyone else* an answer to suggest?" he was going to the extent of his conscientious privilege – leaving it to the conscience of each sister to decide and act accordingly. This plan certainly does divide the *responsibility*. The chief difficulty about it seems to be that it *implies* an impropriety on the part of the sisters who answer, in the judgment of the more prominent brethren.

We trust that none of the brethren takes the view that the sisters have no good thoughts; nor that they are incapable of expressing these; nor that they cannot teach well their own sons and daughters. All must admit that women have displayed wonderful powers in teaching, reasoning, managing, etc. And all noble men, and especially all developed brethren, must desire to

"render honor to whom honor is due" – and therefore must greatly honor noble mothers, sisters, wives and daughters, and womankind in general, for their many noble and gentle traits. This certainly is the writer's attitude of heart.

As for the noble Apostle Paul, we cannot think of him as a woman-hater or as a woman-despiser. Surely his epistles clearly show that he, too, honored true womanhood. Who ever expressed the esteem for woman more pointedly than he, when he wrote, "As Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, so ought men also to love their wives as their own bodies"? (Eph. 5:25,28.) His reason for writing as he did respecting woman's sphere of activity *in the Church* was undoubtedly loyalty to God – to duty. Our Lord declared of his apostles, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:19.) And surely the Lord used St. Paul more than any other Apostle to declare the loosing from the Law and the obligations and responsibilities binding upon the "New Creation."

A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

After giving the subject considerable prayer and meditation we feel that a more moderate view than the above might be attached to the words, "I suffer not a woman to teach." It is as follows:

Teaching is not within the province of all the brethren, either; but only for those specially indicated by divine providence. This is shown by several Scriptures. For instance, to the Elders of the Church at Ephesus St. Paul said: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves and to all the flock over which *the holy Spirit hath made you overseers* [elders, shepherds, bishops] to feed [teach] the Church of God." (Acts 20:28.) Again, note the Apostle's statement that *God hath set* the various members in the Body as it hath pleased him, and that amongst those so set he mentions

"teachers." (1 Cor. 12:18,28.) Again, note St. James' words, "Be not many of you *teachers*, brethren." (Jas. 3:1, *Diaglott.*) Again, one of the qualifications to be sought when electing elders was that they should be "*apt to teach.*" (1 Tim. 3:2.) Again, respecting the priestly or teaching service we read, "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. 5:4.) The Lord, speaking through the Church his Body (including males and females, bond and free – all one in Christ), chooses for the eldership certain brethren "apt to teach"; and, as the Apostle indicates, there is a special responsibility resting upon these as respects the feeding of the Lord's flock. Again he asks, "*Are all teachers.*" – 1 Cor. 12:29.

Now, then, may we not interpret the Apostle's words, "I suffer not a woman to teach," to mean – I never sanction a female Elder in the Church. If we may, one difficulty is removed; and it would be well in accord with this view that we read, "If a woman pray or prophesy [speak publicly] in the Church...let her head be covered"; because, in the Church, the woman figuratively represents the Church, while the man represents the Lord, the Head of the Church.

This would settle the matter complained of in the letter above published. Then it would surely be as proper to ask the Berean questions of the sisters as of the brothers; because in this view of the matter, none of those answering would be a teacher nor considered as teaching, but a learner, reciting what he or she had learned or thinks had **[R4122 : page 25]** been learned from the Lord through his instruments or teachers.

To the Editor's mind this is most satisfactory and he trusts that it will be so to all WATCH TOWER readers. If some of the dear sisters have been pained in the past by a too rigid following of the Word, we trust they will be magnanimous and credit the strictness not to a lack of love for women, but to a greater love for

the Lord and his Word. Whoever has been "rightly exercised" by the stricter view will, we believe, receive a corresponding blessing, for our Lord is able to make all things work together for good to each and all of his faithful.

"Let him that is taught in the Word *communicate* unto him that teacheth in all good things." – Gal. 6:6.

