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FEMALE MINISTRY

AN ADDRESS

BY

MRS. GENERAL BOOTH



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FEMALE MINISTRY ;

OR,

WOMAN'S RIGHT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

THE first and most common objection urged against the public exercises of women, is, that they are unnatural and unfeminine. Many labour under a very great but common mistake, viz. that of confounding nature with custom. Use, or custom, makes things appear to us natural, which, in reality, are very unnatural; while, on the other hand, novelty and rarity make very natural things appear strange and contrary to nature. So universally has this power of custom been felt and admitted, that it has given birth to the proverb, 'Use is second nature'. Making allowance for the novelty of the thing, we cannot discover anything either unnatural or immodest in a Christian woman, becomingly attired, appearing on a platform or in a pulpit. By *nature* she seems fitted to grace either, God has given to woman a graceful form and attitude, winning manners, persuasive speech, and, above all, a finely-toned emotional nature; all of which appear to us eminent *natural* qualifications for public speaking.

We admit that want of mental culture, the trammels of custom, the force of prejudice, and one-sided interpretations of Scripture, have hitherto almost excluded her from this sphere; but, before such a sphere is pronounced to be unnatural, it must be proved either that woman has

not the *ability* to teach or to preach, or that the possession and exercise of this ability unnaturalizes her in other respects; that so soon as she presumes to step on the platform or into the pulpit she loses the delicacy and grace of the female character. Whereas, we have numerous instances of her retaining all that is most esteemed in her sex, and faithfully discharging the duties peculiar to her own sphere, and at the same time taking her place with many of our most useful speakers and writers.

Why should woman be confined exclusively to the kitchen and the distaff, any more than man to the field and workshop? Did not God, and has not Nature, assigned to man *his* sphere of labour, 'to till the ground, and to dress it'? And, if exemption is claimed from this kind of toil for a portion of the male sex, on the ground of their possessing ability for intellectual and moral pursuits, we must be allowed to claim the same privilege for woman; nor can we see the exception more *unnatural* in the one case than in the other, or why God in this solitary instance has endowed a being with powers which He never intended her to employ.

There seems to be a great deal of unnecessary fear of women occupying any position which involves publicity, lest she should be rendered unfeminine by the indulgence of ambition or vanity. But why should woman any more than man be charged with ambition when impelled to use her talents for the good of her race? Moreover, as a labourer in the Gospel her position is much higher than in other public capacity; she is at once shielded from all coarse and unrefined influences and associations, her very vocation tending to exalt and refine all the tenderest and most womanly instincts of her nature. As a matter of fact, it is well known to those who have had opportunities of observing the private character and deportment of women engaged in preaching the Gospel, that they have been amongst the most amiable, self-sacrificing, and unobtrusive of their sex.

'We well know', says the late Mr. Gurney, a minister

of the Society of Friends, 'that there are no women among us more generally distinguished for modesty, gentleness, order, and right submission to their brethren, than those who have been called by their Divine Master into the exercise of the Christian ministry.'

Who would dare to charge the sainted Madame Guyon, Lady Maxwell, the talented mother of the Wesleys, Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Whiteman, or Miss Marsh with being unwomanly or ambitious? Some of these ladies, we know, have adorned by their private virtues the highest ranks of society, and won alike from friends and enemies the highest eulogiums as to the devotedness, purity, and sweetness of their lives. Yet these were all more or less public women, every one of them expounding and exhorting from the Scriptures to mixed companies of men and women. Ambitious, doubtless, they were; but theirs was an ambition akin to His, 'who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame': and to his, who counted all things but dung and dross, and was willing to be regarded as the off-scouring of all things that he might win souls to Jesus and bring glory to God. Would that all the Lord's people had more of this ambition!

Well, but, say our objecting friends, how is it that these whose names you mention, and many others, should venture to preach when female ministry is *forbidden in the Word of God*? This is by far the most serious objection which we have to consider—and if capable of substantiation, should receive our immediate and cheerful acquiescence; but we think that we shall be able to show, by a fair and consistent interpretation, that the very opposite view is the truth; that not only is the public ministry of woman unforbidden, but absolutely enjoined by both precept and example in the Word of God.

And, first, we will select the most prominent and explicit passages of the New Testament referring to the subject, beginning with 1 Corinthians xi. 4, 5: 'Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered,

dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoureth her head; for that is even all one as if she were shaven', etc.

'The character', says a talented writer, 'of the prophesying here referred to by the Apostle is defined in 1 Corinthians xiv. 3, 4, and 31st verses. The reader will see that it was directed to the "edification, exhortation, and comfort of believers"; and the result anticipated was the conviction of unbelievers and unlearned persons. Such were the public services of women which the Apostle allowed, and such was the ministry of females predicted by the prophet Joel, and described as a leading feature of the Gospel dispensation. Women who speak in assemblies for worship under the influence of the Holy Spirit, assume thereby no personal authority over others; they simply deliver the messages of the Gospel, which imply obedience, subjection, and responsibility, rather than authority and power.'

Dr. A. Clarke, on this verse, says:—

'Whatever may be the meaning of praying and prophesying in respect to the man, they have precisely the same meaning in respect to the woman. So that some women at least, as well as some men, might speak to others to edification, exhortation, and comfort. And this kind of prophesying or teaching was predicted by Joel ii. 28, and referred to by Peter (Acts ii. 17). And had there not been such gifts bestowed on woman, the prophecy could not have had its fulfilment. The only difference marked by the Apostle was, the man had his head uncovered, because he was the representative of Christ; the woman had hers covered, because she was placed by the order of God in subjection to the man; and because it was the custom both among Greeks and Romans, and among the Jews an express law that no woman should be seen abroad without a veil. This was and is a custom through all the East, and none but public prostitutes go without veils. If a woman should appear in public without a veil, she would dishonour her head—her husband. And she must appear like to those

women who have their hair shaven off as the punishment of adultery.' See also Doddridge, Whitby, and Cobbin.

We think that the view above given is the only fair and common-sense interpretation of this passage. If Paul does not here recognize the *fact* that women did actually pray and prophesy in the primitive Churches, his language has no meaning at all; and if he does not recognize their *right* to do so by dictating the proprieties of their appearance while so engaged, we leave to objectors the task of educating any sense whatever from his language. If, according to the logic of Dr. Barnes, the Apostle here, in arguing against an improper and indecorous mode of performance, forbids the performance itself, the prohibition extends to the *men* as well as to the women; for Paul as expressly reprehends a man praying with *his* head covered, as he does a woman with *hers* uncovered. With as much force might the Doctor assert that in reproving the same Church for their improper celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians xi. 20, 21), Paul prohibits all Christians, in every age, celebrating it at all. 'The question with the Corinthians was not whether or not the women should pray or prophesy at all: that question had been settled on the day of Pentecost; but whether, as a matter of convenience, they might do so without their veils.' The Apostle kindly and clearly explains that by the law of nature and of society it would be improper to uncover her head while engaged in acts of public worship.

We think that the reflections cast on these women by Dr. Barnes and other commentators are quite gratuitous and uncalled for. Here is no intimation that they ever had uncovered their heads while so engaged; the fairest presumption is, that they had not, nor ever would till they knew the Apostle's mind on the subject. We have precisely the same evidence that the men prayed and preached with their hats on, as that women removed their veils, and wore their hair dishevelled; which is simply none at all. We cannot but regard it as a signal evidence of the power of prejudice, that a man of

Dr. Barnes's general clearness and acumen should condescend to treat this passage in the manner he does. The Doctor evidently feels the untenableness of his position; and endeavours, by muddling two passages of distinct and different bearing, to annihilate the argument fairly deducible from the first. We would like to ask the Doctor on what authority he makes such an exception as the following: 'But this cannot be interpreted as meaning that it is improper for females to speak or pray in meetings of their own sex'. Indeed! but according to the most reliable statistics we possess, two-thirds of the whole Church is, and always has been, composed of their own sex. If, then, 'no rule of the New Testament is more positive than this, viz. that women are to keep *silence* in the Churches', on whose authority does the Doctor license them to speak to by far the larger portion of the Church?

A barrister writing to us on the above passage, says:—

'Paul here takes for granted that women were in the habit of praying and prophesying; he expresses no surprise nor utters a syllable of censure; he was only anxious that they should not provoke unnecessary obloquy by laying aside their customary head-dress, or departing from the dress which was indicative of modesty in the country in which they lived. This passage seems to prove beyond the possibility of dispute that in the *early* times women were permitted to speak to the "edification and comfort" of Christians, and that the Lord graciously endowed them with grace and gifts for this service. What He did then may He not be doing now? It seems truly astonishing that Bible students, with the second chapter of the Acts before them, should not see that an imperative decree has gone forth from God, the execution of which women cannot escape: whether they like or not, they "*shall*" prophesy throughout the whole course of this dispensation; and they have been doing so, though they and their blessed labours are not much noticed.'

Well, but, say our objecting friends, hear what Paul says in another place: 'Let your women keep silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn* anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the Church' (1 Corinthians xiv. 34, 35). Now, let it be borne in mind this is the same Apostle, writing to the same Church, as in the above instance. Will any one maintain that Paul here refers to the same kind of speaking as before? If so, we insist on his supplying us with some rule of interpretation which will harmonize this unparalleled contradiction and absurdity. Taking the simple and common-sense view of the two passages, viz. that one refers to the devotional and religious exercises in the Church, and the other to inconvenient asking of questions, and imprudent or ignorant talking, there is no contradiction or discrepancy, no straining or twisting of either. If, on the other hand, we assume that the Apostle refers in both instances to the same thing, we make him in one page give the most explicit directions how a thing shall be performed, which in a page or two further on, and writing to the *same* Church, he expressly forbids being performed at all. We admit that 'it is a shame for women to speak in the Church', in the sense here intended by the Apostle; but before the argument based on these words can be deemed of any worth, objectors must prove that the 'speaking' here is synonymous with that concerning the manner of which the Apostle legislates in 1 Corinthians xi.

Dr. A. Clarke, on this passage, says: 'According to the prediction of Joel, the Spirit of God was to be poured out on the women as well as the men, that *they* might

* 'Learning anything by asking their husbands at home' cannot mean *preaching*. That is not learning, but *teaching* 'the way of God'. It cannot mean being inspired by the Holy Ghost to foretell future events. No woman, having either taught or prophesied, would have to ask her husband at home before she knew what she had done, or understood what she had said. Such women would be only fit to 'learn in silence with all subjection'. The reference is evidently to subjects under debate.

prophesy; *that is, teach*. And that they did prophesy or teach is evident from what the Apostle says (1 Corinthians xi.), where he lays down rules to regulate this part of their conduct while ministering in the Church. All that the Apostle opposes here is their *questioning, finding fault, disputing, etc.*, in the Christian Church, as the Jewish men were permitted to do in their synagogues (see Luke ii. 46); together with attempts to usurp authority over men by setting up their judgment in opposition to them; for the Apostle has reference to acts of disobedience and arrogance, of which no woman would be guilty who was under the influence of the Spirit of God.'

The Rev. J. H. Robinson, writing on this passage, remarks:—

'The silence imposed here must be explained by the verb, to speak (*λαλεῖν*), used afterwards. Whatever that verb means in this verse, I admit and believe the women were forbidden to do *in the Church*. But what does it mean? It is used nearly 300 times in the New Testament, and scarcely any verb is used with so great a variety of adjuncts. In Schleusner's *Lexicon*, its meaning is traced under seventeen distinct heads, and he occupies two full pages of the book in explaining it. Among other meanings he gives *respondeo, rationem reddo, praecipio, jubeo*; I answer, I return a reason, I give rule or precept, I order, decree'.

In Robinson's *Lexicon* (Bloomfield's edition), two pages nearly are occupied with the explanation of this word; and he gives instances of its meaning, 'as modified by the *context*, where the sense lies, not so much in *λαλεῖν* (*lalein*) as in the adjuncts'. *The passage under consideration is one of those to which he refers as being so modified by the context*'.

Greenfield gives, with others, the following meanings of the word: 'to prattle—be *loquacious as a child*; to *speak in answer—to answer*, as in John xix. 10; harangue, plead, Acts ix. 29; xxi. *To direct, command*, Acts iii. 22.

In Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*, the following

meanings are given: 'to chatter, babble; of birds, to twitter, chirp; strictly, to make an inarticulate sound, opposed to articulate speech; but also generally, to talk, say.

'It is clear, then, that λαλεῖν may mean something different from mere speaking, and that to use this word in a prohibition does not imply that absolute silence or abstinence from speaking is enjoined; but, on the contrary, that the prohibition applies to an improper kind of speaking which is to be understood, not from the word itself, but, as Mr. Robinson says, from "the context". Now, "the context" shows that it was not *silence* which was imposed upon women in the Church, but only a refraining from such speaking as was inconsistent with the words, "they are commanded to be under obedience"; or, more literally, "to be obedient": that is, they were to refrain from such questionings, dogmatical assertions, and disputations, as would bring them into collision with the men—as would ruffle their tempers, and occasion an unamiable volubility of speech. This kind of speaking, and this alone, as it appears to me, was forbidden by the Apostle in the passage before us. This kind of speaking was the only supposable antagonist to, and violation of, "obedience". Absolute silence was not essential to that "obedience". My studies in "Bible Criticism", etc., have not informed me that a woman must cease to speak before she can obey; and I am therefore led to the irresistible conclusion that it is not *all* speaking in the Church which the Apostle forbids, and which he pronounces to be shameful; but, on the contrary, a pertinacious, inquisitive, domineering, dogmatical kind of speaking, which, while it is unbecoming in a man, is shameful and odious in a woman, and especially when that woman is in the Church, and is speaking on the deep things of religion.'

Parkhurst in his *Lexicon*, tells us that 'The Greek word *lalein*, which our translation renders "speak", is *not* the word used in Greek to signify to speak with premeditation and prudence, but is the word used to

signify to speak imprudently and without consideration, and is that applied to one who lets his tongue run, but does not speak to the purpose, but says nothing'. Now unless Parkhurst is utterly wrong in his Greek, which it is apprehended no one will venture to affirm, Paul's fulmination is not launched against speech with premeditation and prudence, but against speech devoid of these qualities. It would be well if all speakers of the male as well as the female sex were obedient to this rule.

We think that with the light cast on this text by the four eminent Greek scholars above quoted, there can be no doubt in any unprejudiced mind as to the true meaning of *lalein* in this connexion. And we find from Church history that the primitive Christians thus understood it; for that women did actually speak and preach amongst them we have indisputable proof. God had promised in the last days to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that the *daughters* as well as the sons of mankind should prophesy.

And Peter says most emphatically, respecting the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, 'This is that which is spoken of by the prophet Joel', etc. (Acts ii. 16-18.) Words more explicit, and an application of prophecy more direct than this, does not occur within the range of the New Testament.

Commentators say: 'If women have the gift of prophecy, they must not use that gift in public.' But God says, by His prophet Joel, they *shall* use it, just in the same sense as the sons use it. When the dictation of men so flatly opposes the express declaration of the 'sure word of prophecy', we make no apology for its utter and indignant rejection.

Presbuteros, a talented writer of the Protestant Electoral Union, in his reply to a priest of Rome, says:—

'Habituated for ages, as men had been, to the diabolical teaching and delusions practised upon them by the papal "priesthood", it was difficult for them when they did get possession of the Scriptures to discern therein the plain fact, that among the primitive Christians

preaching was not confined to men; but women also, gifted with power by the Holy Spirit, preached the Gospel; and hence the slowness with which, even at the present time, this truth has been admitted by those giving heed to the Word of God, and especially those setting themselves up as a "priesthood" or a "clergy". As shown in page 66, God had, according to His promise, on the day of Pentecost, poured out His Holy Spirit upon believers—men and women, old and young—that they should *prophesy*; and they *did* so. The prophesying spoken of was not the foretelling of events, but the *preaching* to the world at large the glad tidings of Salvation by Jesus Christ. For this purpose it pleased God to make use of *women* as well as men. It is plainly the duty of every Christian to insist upon the fulfilment of the will of God, and the abrogation of every single thing inconsistent therewith.

'I would draw attention to the fact that Phebe, a Christian woman whom we find in our version of the Scripture (Romans xvi. 1) spoken of only as any common servant attached to a congregation, was nothing less than one of those gifted by the Holy Spirit for *publishing the glad tidings, or preaching the Gospel*. The manner in which the Apostle (whose only care was the propagation of evangelical truth) speaks of her, shows that she was what he in Greek styled her, a deacon (*diaconon*) or preacher of the Word. Other translators speak of *her* (because she was a *woman*) only as "a *servant* of the Church which is at Cenchrea". The men "deacons" they styled ministers, but a woman on the same level as themselves would be an anomaly; and, therefore, she was to be only the *servant* of men *ministers*, who, in the *popish sense*, constituted the Church!' The Apostle says of her: 'I command unto you Phebe our sister, who is a minister (*diaconon*) of the Church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in *whatever business* she hath need of you.'

To the common sense of disinterested minds it will

be evident that the Apostle could not have requested more for any one of the most zealous of men preachers than he did for Phebe! They were to assist 'her in *whatever business she*' might require their aid. Hence we discern that she had no such trifling position in the primitive Church as at the present time episcopal dignitaries attach to deacons and deaconesses! Observe, the same Greek word is used to designate her that was applied to all the Apostles and to Jesus Himself. For example: 'Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister (*diaconon*) of the circumcision' (Romans xv. 8). 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers (*diaconoi*) by whom ye believed?' (1 Corinthians iii. 5). 'Our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers (*diaconos*) of the New Testament' (2 Corinthians iii. 6). 'In all things approving ourselves as the ministers (*diaconoi*) of God' (vi. 4). The idea of a woman deacon in the '*three orders*'!—it was intolerable, therefore let her be a 'servant'. Theodoret, however, says: 'The fame of Phebe was spoken of throughout the world. She was known not only to the Greeks and Romans, but also to the Barbarians', which implies that she had travelled much, and propagated the Gospel in foreign countries. See Doddridge, Cobbin, and Wesley, on this passage.

'Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the Apostles; who also were in Christ before me' (Romans xvi. 7). By the word 'kinsmen' one would take Junia to have been a man; but Chrysostom and Theophylact, who were both Greeks, and, consequently, knew their mother tongue better than our translators, say *Junia was a woman*. 'Kinsmen' should, therefore, have been rendered kinsfolk; but with our translators it was out of all character to have a *woman* of note amongst the Apostles, and a fellow-prisoner with Paul for the Gospel: *therefore, let them be kinsmen!*

Justin Martyr, who lived till about A.D. 150, says, in his dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, that 'both men and women were seen among them who had the extraordinary

gifts of the Spirit of God, according as the prophet Joel had foretold, by which he endeavoured to convince the Jews that the latter days were 'come'.

Dodwell, in his Dissertations of Irenaeus, says that 'the gift of the spirit of prophecy was given to others besides the Apostles: and that not only in the first and second, but in the third century—even to the time of Constantine—all sorts and ranks of men had these gifts; yea, and *women* too'.

Eusebius speaks of Potomania Ammias, a prophetess, in Philadelphia, and others, 'who were equally distinguished for their love and zeal in the cause of Christ'.

'The Scriptural idea', says Mrs. Palmer, 'of the terms "preach" and "prophecy"', stands so inseparably connected as one and the same thing, that we should find it difficult to get aside from the fact that women did preach, or, in other words, prophecy, in the early ages of Christianity, and have continued to do so down to the present time to just the degree that the spirit of the Christian dispensation had been recognized. And it is also a significant fact, that to the degree denominations, who have once favoured the practice, lose the freshness of their zeal, and, as a consequence, their primitive simplicity, and, as ancient Israel, yield to a desire to be like surrounding communities, in a corresponding ratio are the labours of females discountenanced.'

If any one still insists on a literal application of this text, we beg to ask how he disposes of the preceding part of the chapter where it occurs. Surely, if one verse be so authoritative and binding, the whole chapter is equally so; and, therefore, those who insist on a literal application of the words of Paul, under all circumstances and through all time, will be careful to observe the Apostle's order of worship in their own congregations. But, we ask, where is the minister who lets his whole Church prophesy one by one, and he himself sits still and listens while they are speaking, so that all things may be done decently and in order? But Paul as expressly lays down this order as he does the rule for women, and

he adds, 'The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord' (verse 37). Why, then, do not ministers abide by these directions? We anticipate their reply—'Because these directions were given to the Corinthians as temporary arrangements; and, though they were the commandments of the Lord to them at that time, they do not apply to all Christians in all times'. Indeed; but, unfortunately for their argument, the prohibition of women speaking, even if it meant what they wish, was given amongst those very directions, and to the Corinthians *only*: for it reads, 'Let *your* women keep silence', etc.; and for aught this passage teaches to the contrary, Christian women of all other Churches might do what these women were forbidden to do. Until, therefore, learned divines make a personal application of the rest of the chapter, they must excuse us declining to do so of the 24th verse; and we challenge them to show any breach of the Divine law in one case more than the other.

Another passage frequently cited as prohibitory of female labour in the Church, is 1 Timothy ii. 12, 13. Though we have never met with the slightest proof that this text has any reference to the public exercises of women; nevertheless, as it is often quoted, we will give it a fair and thorough examination.

'It is primarily an injunction', says the Rev. J. H. Robinson, 'respecting her personal behaviour at home. It stands in connexion with precepts respecting her apparel and her domestic position; especially her relation to her husband. No one will suppose that the Apostle forbids a woman to "teach" absolutely and universally. Even objectors would allow her to teach her own sex in private; they would let her teach her servants and children, and, perhaps, her husband too. If he were ignorant of the Saviour, might she not teach him the way to Christ? If she were acquainted with languages, arts or sciences, which he did not know, might she not teach him these things? Certainly she might! The "teaching", therefore, which is forbidden

by the Apostle, is not every kind of teaching, any more than, in the previous instance, his prohibition of speaking applied to every kind of speaking in the Church; but it is such teaching as is domineering, and as involves the usurpation of authority over the man. This is the only teaching forbidden by St. Paul in the passage cited.

'If this passage be not a prohibition of every kind of teaching, we can only ascertain what kind of teaching is forbidden by the modifying expressions with which *didaskhein* stands associated: and for anything these modifying expressions affirm to the contrary, her teaching may be public, reiterated, urgent, and may comprehend a variety of subjects, provided it be not dictatorial, domineering, nor vociferous; for then, and then only, would it be incompatible with her obedience.'

The Rev. Dr. Taft says: 'This passage should be rendered, "I suffer not a woman to teach by usurping authority over the man". This rendering removes all the difficulties and contradictions involved in the ordinary reading, and evidently gives the meaning of the Apostle.' 'If the nature of society,' says the same writer, 'its good and prosperity, in which women are jointly and equally concerned with men; if in many cases their fitness and capacity for instructors, being admitted to be equal to the other sex, be not reasons sufficient to convince the candid reader of woman's right to preach and teach because of two texts in Paul's Epistles, let him consult the paraphrase of Locke, where he has proved to a demonstration that the Apostle, in these texts, never intended to prohibit women from praying and preaching in the Church provided they were dressed as became women professing godliness, and were qualified for the sacred office.'

'It will be found,' says another writer, 'by an examination of this text with its connexions, that the teaching here alluded to stands in necessary connexion with usurping authority, as though the Apostle had said, the Gospel does not alter the relation of women in view of priority, for Adam was first formed, then Eve.'

' This prohibition ', says the barrister quoted on p. 8, ' refers exclusively to the private life and domestic character of woman, and simply means that an ignorant or unruly woman is not to force her opinions on the man, whether he will or no. It has no reference whatever to good women living in obedience to God and their husbands, or to women sent out to preach the Gospel by the call of the Holy Spirit.'

If the context is allowed to fix the meaning of *didaskhein* in this text, as it would be in any other, there can be no doubt in any honest mind that the above is the only consistent interpretation; and if it be, then this prohibition has no bearing whatever on the religious exercises of women led and taught by the Spirit of God: and we cannot forbear asking on whose skirts the mischief resulting from the false application of this text will be found? Thank God, the day is dawning with respect to this subject. Women are studying and investigating for themselves. They are claiming to be recognized as responsible beings, answerable to God for their convictions of duty; and, urged by the Divine Spirit, they are overstepping those unscriptural barriers which the Church has so long reared against its performance.

Whether the Church will allow women to speak in *her* assemblies can only be a question of time; common sense, public opinion, and the blessed results of female agency will force her to give us an honest and impartial rendering of the solitary text on which she grounds her prohibitions. Then, when the true light shines, and God's words take the place of man's traditions, the Doctor of Divinity who shall teach that Paul commands woman to be silent when God's Spirit urges her to speak, will be regarded much the same as we should regard an astronomer who should teach that the sun is the earth's satellite.

Another argument urged against female preaching is, that it is unnecessary; that there is plenty of scope for her efforts in private, in visiting the sick and poor, and working for the temporalities of the Church. Doubtless,

woman ought to be thankful for any sphere for benefiting her race and glorifying God. But we cannot be blind to the supreme selfishness of making her so welcome to the hidden toil and self-sacrifice, the hewing of wood and the drawing of water, the watching and waiting, the reproach and persecution attaching to her Master's service, without allowing her a tittle of the honour which He has attached to the ministration of His Gospel. Here, again, man's theory and God's order are at variance. God says: 'Them that honour Me I will honour'. Our Lord links the joy with the suffering, the glory with the shame, the exaltation with the humiliation, the crown with the cross, the finding of life with the losing of it. Nor did He manifest any such horror at female publicity in His cause as many of His professed people appear to entertain in these days. We have no intimation of His reproving the Samaritan woman for her public proclamation of Him to her countrymen; nor of His rebuking the women who followed Him amidst a taunting mob on His way to the cross. And yet, surely, *privacy* was *their* proper sphere. On one occasion He *did* say, with reference to a woman: 'Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her' (Matthew xxvi. 12; see also Luke vii. 37-50).

As to the obligation devolving on woman to labour for her Master, I presume there will be no controversy. The particular sphere in which each individual shall do this must be dictated by the teachings of the Holy Spirit and the gifts with which God has endowed her. If she have the necessary gifts, and feels herself called by the Spirit to preach, there is not a single word in the whole Book of God to restrain her, but many, very many, to urge and encourage her. God says she *SHALL* do so; and Paul prescribed the manner in which she shall do it; and Phebe, Junio, Philip's four daughters, and many other women actually did preach and speak in the primitive Churches. If this had not been the case, there would

have been less freedom under the new than under the old dispensation; a greater paucity of gifts and agencies under the Spirit than under the law; fewer labourers when more work to be done. Instead of the destruction of caste and division between the priesthood and the people, and the setting up of a spiritual kingdom in which all true believers were 'kings and priests unto God', the division would have been more stringent, and the disabilities of the common people greater. Whereas we are told, again and again in effect, that in 'Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, male nor female, but ye are all one in Christ Jesus'.

We commend a few passages bearing on the ministrations of woman under the old dispensation to the careful consideration of our readers:—

'And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time', etc. (Judges iv. 4-10). There are two particulars in this passage worthy of note. First, the authority of Deborah as a prophetess, or revealer of God's will to Israel, was acknowledged and submitted to as implicitly as in the cases of the male judges who succeeded her. Secondly, she is made the military head of 10,000 men, Barak refusing to go to battle without her.

Again, in 2 Kings xxii. 12-20, we have an account of the king sending the high priest, the scribe, etc., to Huldah, the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, who dwelt at Jerusalem, in the college, to inquire at her mouth the will of God in reference to the book of the law which had been found in the house of the Lord. The authority and dignity of Huldah's message to the king does not betray anything of that trembling diffidence or abject servility which some persons seem to think should characterize the religious exercises of woman. She answers him as the prophetess of the Lord, having the signet of the King of kings attached to her utterances.

'The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it' (Psalm lxxviii. 11). In

the original Hebrew it is, 'Great was the company of women publishers, or women evangelists'. Grotius explains this passage: 'The Lord shall give the word, that is, plentiful matter of speaking; so that He would call those which follow the great army of preaching women, victories, or female conquerors.' How comes it that the feminine word is actually excluded in this text? That it is there as plainly as any other word no Hebrew scholar will deny. It is too much to assume that as our translators could not *alter* it, as they did '*diaconon*' when applied to Phebe, they preferred to leave it out altogether rather than give a prophecy so unpalatable to their prejudice. But the Lord gives the word, and He will choose whom He pleases to publish it; notwithstanding the condemnation of translators and divines.

'For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam' (Micah vi. 4). God here classes Miriam with Moses and Aaron, and declares that *He* sent her before His people. We fear that had some of our friends been men of Israel at that time, they would have disputed such a leadership.

In the light of such passages as these, who will dare to dispute the fact that God did, under the old dispensation, endue His handmaidens with the gifts and calling of prophets answering to our present idea of preachers? Strange, indeed, would it be if under the *fullness* of the Gospel dispensation there were nothing analogous to this, but 'positive and explicit rules', to prevent any approximation thereto. We are thankful to find, however, abundant evidence that the 'spirit of prophecy which is the testimony of Jesus', was poured out on the female as fully as on the male disciple, and 'His daughters and His handmaidens' prophesied.

We commend the following texts from the New Testament to the careful consideration of our readers:—

'And she (Anna) was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but

served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem' (Luke ii. 37, 38). Can any one explain wherein this exercise of Anna's differed from that of Simeon, recorded just before? It was in the same public place, the temple. It was during the same service. It was equally public, for she '*spake* of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem'. (See Watson on this passage.)

Jesus said to the two Marys: 'All hail! And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not *afraid*: go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me' (Matthew xxviii. 9, 10). There are two or three points in this beautiful narrative to which we wish to call the attention of our readers.

First, it was the *first* announcement of the glorious news to a lost world and a company of forsaking disciples. Second, it was as *public* as the nature of the case demanded; and intended ultimately to be published to the ends of the earth. Third, Mary was expressly commissioned to reveal the fact to the Apostles; and thus she literally became their teacher on that memorable occasion. Oh, glorious privilege, to be allowed to herald the glad tidings of a Saviour risen! How could it be that our Lord chose a *woman* to this honour? Well, one reason might be that the male disciples were all missing at the time. They all forsook Him, and fled. But woman was there, as she had ever been, ready to minister to her risen, as to her dying, Lord.

Not she with traitorous lips her Saviour stung,
Not she denied Him with unholy tongue;
She, whilst Apostles shrunk, could danger brave;
Last at the cross, and earliest at the grave.

But, surely, if the dignity of our Lord or His message were likely to be imperilled by committing this sacred trust to a woman, He who was guarded by legions of angels could have commanded another messenger; but,

as if intent on doing her honour, and rewarding her unwavering fidelity, He reveals Himself *first* to her; and, as an evidence that He had taken out of the way the curse under which she had so long groaned, nailing it to His cross, He makes her who had been first in the transgression first also in the glorious knowledge of complete redemption.

'Acts i. 14, and ii. 1-4. We are in the first of these passages expressly told that the women were assembled with the disciples on the day of Pentecost; and in the second, that the cloven tongues sat upon them *each*, and the Holy Ghost filled them *all*, and they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. It is nothing to the point to argue that the gift of tongues was a miraculous gift, seeing that the Spirit was the primary bestowment. The tongues were only emblematical of the office which the Spirit was henceforth to sustain to His people. The Spirit was given alike to the female as to the male disciple, and this is cited by Peter (vv. 16, 18), as the peculiar speciality of the latter dispensation. What a remarkable device of the Devil that he has so long succeeded in hiding this characteristic of the latter-day glory! *He* knows, whether the Church does or not, how eminently detrimental to the interests of his kingdom have been the religious labours of woman; and while her Seed has mortally bruised his head, he ceases not to bruise her heel; but the time of her deliverance draweth nigh.'

'Philip the Evangelist had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.' From Eusebius, the ancient ecclesiastical historian, we learn that Philip's daughters lived to a good old age, always abounding in the work of the Lord. 'Mighty luminaries', he writes, 'have fallen asleep in Asia. Philip, and two of his virgin daughters, sleep at Hierapolis; the other, and the beloved disciple, John, rest at Ephesus.'

'And I entreat thee, also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers' (Philippians iv. 3). This is a recognition of *female labourers*,

not *concerning* the Gospel, but *in* the Gospel, whom Paul classes with Clement, and other his fellow-labourers. Precisely the same terms are applied to Timotheus, whom Paul styles a 'minister of God, and his fellow-labourer in the Gospel of Christ' (1 Thessalonians iii. 2).

Again: 'Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus; who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles' (Romans xvi. 3, 4).

The word rendered 'helpers' means a fellow-labourer, associate, coadjutor,* working together, an assistant, a joint labourer, a colleague.† In the New Testament spoken only of a co-worker, helper in a Christian work, that is, of Christian teachers.‡ How can these terms, with any show of consistency, be made to apply merely to the exercise of hospitality towards the Apostle, or the duty of private visitation. To be a partner, coadjutor, or joint worker *with* a preacher of the Gospel, must be something more than to be his waiting-maid.

Again: 'Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord' (Romans xvi. 12). Dr. Clarke, on this verse, says:—

'Many have spent much useless labour in endeavouring to prove that these women did not preach. That there were prophetesses as well as prophets in the Church, we learn; and that a woman might pray or prophesy, provided that she had her head covered, we know; and, according to St. Paul (1 Corinthians xiv. 3), whoever prophesied spoke unto others to edification, exhortation, and comfort; and that no preacher can do more every person must acknowledge. Because to edify, exhort, and comfort, are the prime ends of the Gospel ministry. If women thus prophesied, then women preached.'

'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' (Galatians iii. 28). If this

* Greenfield.

† Dunbar.

‡ Robinson.

passage does not teach that in the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of Christ's Kingdom, all differences of nation, caste, and sex are abolished, we should like to know what it does teach, and wherefore it was written. (See also 1 Corinthians vii. 22.)

As we have before observed, the text 1 Corinthians xiv. 34, 35, is the *only one* in the whole Book of God which even by a false translation can be made prohibitory of female speaking in the Church. How comes it, then, that by this one isolated passage, which, according to our best Greek authorities,* is wrongly rendered and wrongly applied, woman's lips have been sealed for centuries, and the 'testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy', silenced, when bestowed on her? How is it that this solitary text has been allowed to stand unexamined and unexplained, nay, that learned commentators who have *known* its true meaning as perfectly as either Robinson, Bloomfield, Greenfield, Scott, Parkhurst, or Locke have upheld the delusion, and enforced it as a Divine precept binding on all female disciples through all time? Surely there must have been some unfaithfulness, 'craftiness', and 'handling of the word of life deceitfully' somewhere. Surely the love of caste and unscriptural jealousy for a separated priesthood has had something to do with this anomaly. By this course divines and commentators have involved themselves in all sorts of inconsistencies and contradictions; and worse, they have nullified some of the most precious promises of God's Word. They have set the most explicit predictions of prophecy at variance with apostolic injunctions, and the most immediate and wonderful operations of the Holy Ghost in direct opposition 'to positive, explicit, and universal rules'.

Notwithstanding, however, all this opposition to female ministry on the part of those deemed authorities in the Church, there have been some in all ages in whom the Holy Ghost has wrought so mightily, that, at the

* Disinterested witnesses every one will allow.

sacrifice of reputation and all things most dear, they have been compelled to come out as witnesses for Jesus and ambassadors of His Gospel. As a rule, these women have been amongst the most devoted and self-denying of the Lord's people, giving indisputable evidence by the purity and beauty of their lives that they were led by the Spirit of God. Now, if the Word of God forbids female ministry, we would ask how it happens that so many of the most devoted handmaidens of the Lord have felt themselves constrained by the Holy Ghost to exercise it? Surely there must be some mistake somewhere, for the Word and the Spirit cannot contradict each other. Either the Word does not condemn women preaching, or these confessedly holy women have been deceived.

Will any one venture to assert that such women as Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley, and Mrs. Smith, have been deceived with respect to their call to deliver the Gospel message to their fellow-creatures? If not, then God does call and qualify women to preach, and His Word, rightly understood, cannot forbid what His Spirit enjoins. Further, it is a significant fact, which we commend to the consideration of all thoughtful Christians, that the public ministry of women has been eminently owned of God in the Salvation of souls and the edification of His people. Paul refers to the *fruits* of his labours as evidence of His Divine commission (1 Corinthians ix. 2): 'If I am not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.' If this criterion be allowed to settle the question respecting woman's call to preach, we have no fear as to the result.

A few examples of the blessing which has attended the ministrations of females may help to throw some light on this matter of a Divine call:—

At a missionary meeting held at Columbia, March 26, 1824, the name of Mrs. Smith, of the Cape of Good Hope, was brought before the meeting, when Sir Richard Otley, the chairman, said: 'The name of Mrs. Smith

has been justly celebrated by the religious world. In the colony of the Cape of Good Hope, I heard a talented missionary state, that wherever he went in that colony, at 600 or 1,000 miles from the principal seat of government, among the natives of Africa, and wherever he saw persons converted to Christianity, the name of Mrs. Smith was hailed as the person from whom they received their religious impressions; and although no less than ten missionaries, all men of piety and industry, were stationed in that settlement, the exertions of Mrs. Smith alone were more efficacious, and had been attended with greater success than the labours of those missionaries combined.'

The Rev. J. Campbell, missionary to Africa, says: 'So extensive were the good effects of her pious exhortations, that on my first visit to the colony, wherever I met with persons of evangelical piety, I generally found that their first impressions of religion were ascribed to Mrs. Smith.'

Mrs. Mary Taft, the talented lady of the Rev. Dr. Taft, was another eminently successful labourer in the Lord's vineyard. 'If', says Mrs. Palmer, 'the criterion by which we may judge of a Divine call to proclaim Salvation be by the proportion of fruit gathered, then to the commission of Mrs. Taft is appended the Divine signature to a degree pre-eminently unmistakable. In reviewing her diary, we are constrained to believe that not one minister in 500 could produce so many seals to their ministry. An eminent minister informed us that of those who had been brought to Christ through her labours, over 200 entered the ministry. She seldom opened her mouth in public assemblies, either in prayer or speaking, but the Holy Spirit accompanied her words in such a wonderful manner, that sinners were convicted, and, as in apostolic times, were constrained to cry out, "What must we do to be saved?"' She laboured under the sanction and was hailed as a fellow-helper in the Gospel by the Revs. Messrs. Mather, Pawson,

Hearnshaw, Blackborne, Marsden, Bramwell, Vasey, and many other equally distinguished ministers of her time.'

The Rev. Mr. Pawson, when President of the Wesleyan Conference, writes as follows to a circuit where Mrs. Taft was stationed with her husband where she met with some gainsayers :—

'It is well known that religion has been for some time at a very low ebb in Dover. I therefore could not help thinking that it was a kind providence that Mrs. Taft was stationed among you, and that, by the blessing of God, she might be the instrument of reviving the work of God among you. I seriously believe Mrs. Taft to be a deeply pious, prudent, modest woman. I believe the Lord hath owned and blessed her labours very much, and many, yes, very many souls have been brought to the saving knowledge of God by her preaching. Many have come to hear her out of curiosity, who would not have come to hear a man, and have been awakened and converted to God. I do assure you there is much fruit of her labours in many parts of our Connexion.'

Mrs. Fletcher, the wife of the sainted Vicar of Madeley, was another of the daughters of the Lord on whom was poured the spirit of prophecy. This eminently devoted lady opened an orphan house, and devoted her time, her heart, and her fortune, to the work of the Lord. The Rev. Mr. Hodson, in referring to her public labours, says :—

'Mrs. Fletcher was not only luminous, but truly eloquent—her discourses displayed much good sense, and were fraught with the riches of the Gospel. She excelled in the poetry of an orator which can alone supply the place of all the rest—that eloquence which goes directly to the heart. She was the honoured instrument of doing much good; and the fruit of her labours is now manifest in the lives and tempers of numbers who will be her crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.'

The Rev. Henry Moore sums up a fine eulogium on

her character and labours by saying: 'May not every pious Churchman say, Would to God all the Lord's people were such prophets and prophetesses!'

Miss Elizabeth Hurrell travelled through many counties in England, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ; and very many were, through her instrumentality, brought to a knowledge of the truth, not a few of whom were afterwards called to fill very honourable stations in the Church.

From the Methodist Conference, held at Manchester, 1787, Mr. Wesley wrote to Miss Sarah Mallett, whose labours, while very acceptable to the people, had been opposed by some of the preachers: 'We give the right hand of fellowship to Sarah Mallett, and have no objection to her being a *preacher in our connexion*, so long as she preaches Methodist doctrine, and attends to our discipline.'

Such are a few examples of the success attending the public labours of females in the Gospel. We might give many more, but our space only admits of a bare mention of Mrs. Wesley, Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. President Edwards, Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, Mrs. Hall, Mrs. Gilbert, Miss Lawrence, Miss Newman, Miss Miller, Miss Tooth, and Miss Cutler, whose holy lives and zealous labours were owned of God in the conversion of thousands of souls, and the abundant edification of the Lord's people.

Nor are the instances of the spirit of prophecy bestowed on women confined to by-gone generations: the revival of this age, as well as of every other, has been marked by this endowment, and the labours of such pious and talented ladies as Mrs. Palmer, Mrs. Finney, Mrs. Wightman, Miss Marsh,* with numberless other Marys and Phebes, have contributed in no small degree to its extension and power.

We have endeavoured in the foregoing pages to

* The record of this lady's labours has long been before the public. 'English Hearts and Hands', in a truly fascinating manner, describes the wonderful success with which those labours have been attended. Well has it been for the spiritual interest of hundreds that no sacerdotal conclave has been able to place the seal of silence upon her lips, and assign her to *privacy as her proper sphere*.

establish, what we sincerely believe, that woman has a *right* to teach. Here the whole question hinges. If she has the *right*, she has it independently of any man-made restrictions which do not equally refer to the opposite sex. If she has the right, and possesses the necessary qualifications, we maintain that, where the law of expediency does not prevent, she is at liberty to exercise it without any further pretensions to inspiration than those put forth by the male sex. If, on the other hand, it can be proved that she has *not* the right, but that imperative silence is imposed upon her by the Word of God, we cannot see who has authority to relax or make exceptions to the law.

If commentators had dealt with the Bible on other subjects as they have dealt with it on this, taking isolated passages, separated from their explanatory connexions, and insisting on a literal interpretation of the words of our Version, what errors and contradictions would have been forced upon the acceptance of the Church, and what terrible results would have accrued to the world! On this principle the Universalist will have all men unconditionally saved, because the Bible says, 'Christ is the Saviour of all men', etc. The Antinomian, according to this rule of interpretation, has most unquestionable foundation for his dead faith and hollow profession, seeing that St. Paul declares over and over again that men are 'saved by faith and not by works'. The Unitarian, also, in support of that soul-withering doctrine, triumphantly refers to numerous passages which, taken alone, teach only the humanity of Jesus. In short, 'there is no end to the errors in faith and practice which have resulted from taking isolated passages, wrested from their proper connexions, or the light thrown upon them by other Scriptures, and applying them to sustain a favourite theory'. Judging from the blessed results which have almost invariably followed the ministrations of women in the cause of Christ, we fear it will be found, in the great day of account, that a mistaken and unjustifiable application of the passage, 'Let your women keep

silence in the Churches', has resulted in more loss to the Church, evil to the world, and dishonour to God, than any of the errors we have already referred to.

And feeling, as we have long felt, that this is a subject of vast importance to the interests of Christ's Kingdom and the glory of God, we would most earnestly commend its consideration to those who have influence in the Churches. We think it a matter worthy of their consideration whether God intended woman to bury her talents and influence as she does. And whether the circumscribed sphere of woman's religious labours may not have something to do with the comparative non-success of the Gospel in these latter days.