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OUR HISTORICAL POSITION.

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It is very evident that a wide diversity of sentiment exists in our Church in regard to "our historic position." This grows out of the fact that many go back beyond the Period of the Revolution of 1688 to find it; and they expect to find in the Covenants and Confession of Faith specific statements of our peculiar views. This is a mistake; for while the general principles of the Church of Scotland were not specifically contrary to our position, the truth of Christ's Mediatorial Headship of nations had not been clearly discovered. His Headship of the Church was the main idea of that period called the Second Reformation; and it must be confessed that no clear deliverance was given in regard to His Headship of nations, and the duty of nations to Him as King prior to 1688.

The controversy between the Original Secession and the Society People developed the truth in this regard. The Associate Presbytery was organized about 1732. Eleven years prior to the Reformed Presbytery they held the views of civil government that had prevailed in the Church's preceding history, and that are found in the Westminster Confession. But the Society People discovered the inconsistency of separating from an Erastian Church and still retaining fellowship with an Erastian State, and refused to unite with the Associate Presbytery because it allowed fellowship with the Government that exercised Erastian control and claimed to be the Head of the Church. This in their view was sufficient cause to stand aloof from all recognition of, or allegiance to, the British Crown as God's ordinance. The Revolution settlement involved the principle that a magistrate might be deposed, as was James the Second, for unfaithfulness to the Constitution. But this settlement itself developed a feature of *national organ-*

Looking at the whole case as dispassionately as we can, we are more than ever dissatisfied with the action of the Synod of 1885. It has broken down our discipline in the matter of maintaining our political dissent; and so long as Synod stands by that action, it is sheer folly to expect individual pastors to discipline their members to maintain that dissent. What hinders us from entering the U. P. Church, when Synod has opened the door, and after three years of deliberation refuses to close it?

We are aware that Prof. Willson may bring this article, and whatever clippings he can find, before the Synod, in Belle Centre, in 1889. His position is that no pastor should criticize the action of Synod, in the magazines, during the interim of Synod. This is simplicity simplified. Still we believe him to be honest in his position; for it is in exact accord with his conduct. He has no word of censure for any departure from our principles, either by Synod or any one else; but an alleged proposal to depart excites his indignation. We write thus plainly and frankly because we do not mean to be bound by that which others can violate with impunity. We are in earnest about this matter; and the sooner the brethren come to understand the situation the better it will be for all concerned.

PAUL'S VIEW OF THE WOMAN QUESTION; OR, THE PLACE OF WOMAN IN THE SOCIAL MEET- ING AND CHURCH.

BY THE REV. A. G. VERMILYE, D.D.

Read Before the Pastor's Association.

The subject matter to be considered under this heading occupies three chapters of Paul's Epistles, the first two being the 11th and 14th of 1st Corinthians, the other one being the 2d of 1st Timothy. Coming, then, at once to the first of these chapters, viz., 1 Cor. 11, it is only necessary to gather out the plot of the Apostle's argument, which, however, has an important bearing in its relations to the rest of the subject. He is discussing simply and singly the point of a woman praying or prophesying *with her head uncovered*; of course not at home, but in public, in the assemblies of the Christians. His verdict is, "every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head;" his *reason* being, "for it is even all one as if she were shaven"—a matter of uncomeliness and shame. On this point he appeals to themselves: "is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" and then closes with the earnest disclaimer: "but if any man seem to be *contentious*" (about it) "we have no such custom, neither the churches of God," any of them, that is, "no such custom" as praying or prophesying "with the head uncovered."

I remark upon this, then, First, that the custom, in itself considered, of women praying and prophesying in Christian assemblies, existed. And evidently, now that the very question was before him, lying under his hand for adjudication if he so chose; now, if the Apostle had objections to make or considered the matter as a principle and intended to forbid it, now was the specific time for doing so. On the contrary, what shocked him was want of modesty and decorum (as those times regarded it) in the way. His argument and appeal are addressed solely to this; and then the subject is closed for another.

2d. His objection is in behalf of woman, woman's modesty. It goes no farther. But what a delicate sentiment he displays, and appreciation of woman's glory! Liberty, indeed, were proper, but modesty ever! "Woman," he says, "is the glory of the man," as "he is the image and glory of God!" High position! But then it is the modest woman. Christianity and nature are at one in this. Nature, likewise, meant her to be modest; "for" (not indeed, according to Darwin, but according to Paul—how Christianity refines with beautiful sentiment what it touches!) her *hvir* (her beauty and glory) was "given her for a covering" and veil.

We may now quit this passage, as exhibited sufficiently for our purpose, and pass to the next, viz., 1 Cor. 14. In doing so, and in seeking Paul's meaning, first of all, let us not do him the injustice of supposing him inconsistent with himself or of writing in one chapter what he takes back or nullifies three chapters after. But he has been written to about various matters which he takes up and answers one by one. He has answered about praying and prophesying "with the head uncovered," in the interests of womanly modesty and decorum. He now comes to another question and decides it, but on grounds quite different.

Let us, at this point, peep into an assembly of the Christians. "Every one hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation," and so on. Some are praying, some are prophesying. What confusion, what a hubbub! It is instructive to notice here that all this excitement, this intoxication of zeal and devotion was the direct result and overflow of the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Yes, but as the tropical forest is, with its wild and tangled and unwholesome exuberance; as all life is; which yet for health and beauty and usefulness must (as nature's law) be kept within bounds. It is in this sense that Paul says, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints;" and therefore he says, "let all things be done unto edifying," and, "let all things be done decently and in order." Away, then, with all "salvation army" methods, with its castanets and tomtoms; away even (we may say) with things we sometimes fear to touch, lest we interfere with the Spirit of God! It is not permitted to vulgarize and transgress the natural decency of religion under plea of something religious.

It is in this connection of order and decency in the churches, because "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace," that we confront the text (v. 34), "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 (v. 35) if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

I now propose to gather around these central verses what remains of the elucidation of the subject; by side lights and reflecting lights—the Word of God reflected upon itself—to discover, it may be, what Paul really meant by this forbidding "to speak," in Greek the word being *lalein*. Was it that utter eclipse and silence, to which woman has been so long doomed, whatever her gifts, in our meetings and churches? Two remarks, then, are here pertinent:

1st. The preceding chapter (as I have already shown) requires us to eliminate from his prohibition praying and prophesying. He has done with them; they are not in his mind.

2d. As to prophesying, let us hear Paul's own definition. It was something to edify (build up), something in the way of exhortation, and comfort (chap. 14: 3), something heart searching (v. 25) and prophetic of its secrets. Prayer was speaking unto God; prophesying, "unto men" (chap. 14: 3), and among spiritual gifts, they were to desire "rather that they might prophecy." Moreover, it was one of the predicted signs. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Now suppose one of these gifted spiritual women, under an impulse of the Spirit, to rise in some Christian assembly to pray or, especially, to prophecy! What would Paul say? *Wou'd* he say, "Sit down sister, this is one of the 'forbidden and abhorrent forces;' you must not 'speak,' but be silent!" The answer is, he has not so ruled upon the subject. They must observe womanly modesty; they must observe a proper church decorum, and have regard "that all things be done unto edifying;" under such conditions he would not interfere. But, then, beyond that, there was a point where the objection rose into a principle; at which they were "commanded to be under obedience, as also said the law."

It will help us if we now, and for the present, turn to the third passage, viz., 1 Tim. 2. The reason is, that Paul cannot be inconsistent with himself; and that this chapter to Timothy is, in substance, a *resume* of the two chapters to the Corinthians, which were evidently in his mind.

part is about prayer, wherein (v. 8) he says: "I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." "In like manner, also (v. 9), that women"—now what? Our translation says, "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." But (as Ellicott and others have noticed) the sentence is elliptical; there is something to be supplied, and two constructions are almost equally good; either,

"In like manner, also, I will that women adorn themselves"—or, "I will that women *in praying* adorn themselves in modest apparel," etc.; in which latter the "holy hands" for the men, and the "modest apparel," the "shamefacedness," and the "sobriety" for the women are conspicuously in opposition, and the allusion to 1 Cor. 11 seems clear and perfect. And now, following this, what have we? (v. 11): "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection;" as he had said in 1 Cor. 14: 35, "if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." And then (v. 12): "But I suffer not a woman to teach"—(to be what I am, "a preacher, and an apostle [v 7], a teacher of the Gentiles"), nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be "in silence" as he had said before in 1 Cor. 14: 34, "let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak (rather teach); but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." There is a reason here, and a principle. In Timothy he gives it in full: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." That reason, I beg you to notice, is generic and permanent. Adam first formed, and then her easy credulity and transgression. It is as old as Eden; and because of it she must be "under obedience." It is Gospel founded on nature and law. Teaching, however, implies authority, and she must not "usurp authority over the man." And if she would learn "anything," as implying interruption, question, and perhaps discussion; the same underlying law is, "silence with all subjection"—asking her husband at home.

Returning, at this point, to 1 Cor. 14: 34, there is one remaining thing to be considered, viz., the difference between *didaskēin* (to teach), in Timothy, and *lalein* (to speak), in Corinthians. It is, indeed, Paul's use and understanding of the word we are after. But even apparent difference disappears as inconsequent, if we regard only the general usage of *lalein*. It occurs 247 times in the New Testament, in such connections as these: God the Father speaking to Christ or to men; the Holy Spirit—"the Spirit of your Father"—speaking in and through the apostles; Christ, angels, speaking; and men in most solemn circumstances, teaching the doctrines of God, for instance. But in each case the idea is one of authority, closely allied to teaching. And what idea, I now ask, has Paul evidently in mind, in these verses, but an assumption of authority, unnatural and unbecoming to woman, who, instead of teaching or preaching, is "commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law."

In conclusion, Providence is always thrusting upon, and agitating us with new questions, or old questions in new forms and connections. The Fathers did not have all truth, nor have we; and despite systems and study, theology ever remains a science not quite finished. There always remains over from one age some formally received but neglect-

ed truth, something to be revised, something to be readjusted, something undetected in the spirit or wrongly or imperfectly drawn from the letter of divine truth.

Our own age is furnishing its own quota of problems and questions about the Bible itself, inspiration, its relations to science, probation after death, with many more relating to society and life; questions, some of them decided long ago, and yet to be decided again. Here, too, is the woman question—her rights, education and general place in nature. Providence is thrusting it forward. And amid the flood of books and discussion, what does the Bible say? What are its principles, germs of wise thought and authority, from which we may reason? How does Paul stand, in view of what is going on around us? If “it is a shame for women to speak—even to speak—in the church,” it must be so (apparently) anywhere else, and she is relegated to old fashioned silence; or the age flows past Paul, no longer an authority, and leaves him hopelessly stranded on this rock! On the other hand, would it not be a relief to many to find, on re examination, just what Paul forbids, and the Biblical reason why? to be able to use the spiritual gifts of some gifted spiritual woman in prayer and “edification and exhortation and comfort,” and not be forced to depend, in sorrowful helplessness, upon some stupid old drone of a man?

Paul, if our view be correct, was, indeed, legislating only for the church, but on principles that are general. What he gave liberty to do must be done modestly, and with regard to decorum. And what is a woman without modesty? And in our American society and homes, if there be no corrective and check, no antidote of womanly modesty and sweetness, what a thing society will become? We can stand upon that, for it is nature's teaching, too. Christianity does but take nature's highest type, and refine it with piety. As beyond this liberty, however, and forbidden, is preaching. His reason is generic. She is out of her sphere who attempts to preach. There is a natural relation and fitness implied in the words “first made”—if nothing else, which make it against nature's law, and therefore God's law. And upon that we can stand—with Paul, nature and the fitness of things, at one.

—Christian Intelligencer.

Editorial.

THE SYNOD OF 1888.

The late meeting of Synod reached another high water mark in numerical strength. The Covenanting Synod of 1871 drew together 151 ministers and elders; this number was nearly reached by the Synods of 1876 and 1880, each having 150 members, but it was not equal-