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A hypothesis in history which is probable in itself, which agrees with known facts, and explains and reconciles contradictions, has a good deal of claim upon our acceptance. At the same time this hypothesis does not free us from painful doubt. Had there been extant one coin of some eastern city, which gave proof that the years of Tiberius were there counted from the year 12 A.D., the hypothesis would gain a strong degree of probability. At present, the chronology of our Saviour's life must remain a matter on which nothing positive can be affirmed; the gain of such dissertations as that we have noticed being to allay the scepticism, in regard to facts otherwise verified, which difficulties altogether unexplained leave in the mind.

ARTICLE V.

THE SILENCE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCHES.

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THE true sphere of women we hold to be indicated in the scriptures; and their place, both in the state and in the church, will ultimately be determined by the principles disclosed in those scriptures. For he who created man male and female, instituted the laws of their relationship, and indicated those laws in his revelation to us for our guidance. If, therefore, we can attain unto a just apprehension of these laws in some, or in all, of their bearings, we can determine so far forth the will of God respecting the relation of the sexes in those particulars.

We propose, therefore, to examine the scriptures — which we hold to be our only infallible rule of faith and practice in such matters — respecting the growing practice in the churches of our land of inviting women to take an active part in the public worship of God, and even of allowing them, in some instances, to become ministers of the gospel

of Jesus Christ. We shall assume the inspiration and the textual correctness of the passages to which appeal will be made in this discussion, while we search, with all thoroughness and candor, after their exact teaching respecting the silence of women in the churches.

I. A positive limitation of some sort is put by the scriptures upon women.

In the curse pronounced upon Eve for the first transgression, it is said: "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."¹ The law of the whole animal kingdom — namely, that the males surpass the females in strength; the former being constituted thereby the natural protectors of the latter — is expressly affirmed of the human race. Sadly has the history of mankind, in all lands and centuries, proved the physical superiority of man to woman. For the woman has never been able, on an extended scale, to rule over the man, and to subject him to such bondage and wrongs as he, in most lands and ages, has inflicted upon her. Also, under the law as given by the hand of Moses, a restriction was placed upon the wife, which did not hold in regard to the husband. That restriction was extended even into matters of religion; and it found expression in such language as this: "Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void."² Here, in the gravest of all matters, the husband was armed with authority to confirm or revoke a religious vow and oath of his wife. In the new and final dispensation, it is still further declared, that "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."³ "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. . . . Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."⁴

To these general statements of the relation of the woman

¹ Gen. iii. 16.

² Num. xxx. 13.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 3.

⁴ Eph. v. 23, 24.

to the man, there are certain specific prohibitions added: "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church."¹ "Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."²

It would seem, from these general and specific declarations of scripture, that a limitation of some sort has been placed by the Creator upon the sphere of woman; and that her sphere, in consequence, if co-ordinate, is not co-extensive, with man's. Her sphere seems to have limitations which his has not.

It is worthy of notice, also, that this limitation is distinctly applied to woman, in contradistinction from man. In every passage which we have quoted, as in others also, which we might have quoted, the contrast is expressly made between the male and the female, the husband and the wife, the men and the women; thereby proving that the relative position of the sexes was in the mind of the inspired penman at the time.

In correcting abuses in the church at Corinth, Paul, in the fourteenth chapter of the First Epistle, tells the Corinthians who may take part in their worship; also how and when they may take part in it. He allowed the "prophets" to speak in the assembly, in turn, "by two, or at the most by three." He allowed those who had the gift of tongues to speak in the same order, provided there were present an interpreter; but, if there were present no interpreter to make known their utterances to the assembly, the speaker in an unknown tongue was prohibited from taking any active part in the worship. Then Paul, in contrast with these, forbids, without qualification, the women to speak in the assembly. Of course, then, those who were allowed to speak in order, "by two, or at the most by three," were men; in contrast with whom the women are commanded to "keep silence in the churches." The contrast in the other

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35.

² 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

passage¹ is still more pointed: "I will, therefore, that men [*ἄνδρας*, excluding expressly the women] pray everywhere. . . . In like manner, also, that women [*γυναῖκας*, excluding men] adorn themselves in modest apparel. . . . Let the woman [*γυνή*, without the article, hence woman generically] learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, . . . but to be in silence." Men are to take part in the prayers and instruction of the congregation, "as distinguished from the women, who are to join in the worship in silence, and in modesty of dress and behavior." The contrast could not have been made stronger than it is here found to be. The limitation already pointed out is therefore expressly applied to women, without regard to age, or learning, or position — as women, in contradistinction from men.

II. This limitation, of whatever nature and extent it may hereafter be found to be, is not founded, as some other apostolic directions are, either on some present exigency, or social custom, or changing propriety; but it is founded on something as permanent as the relation of the sexes, and the fact of the first transgression.

On one occasion,² Paul advises against marriage: but, in doing so, he is careful of two things: First, not to give a positive command against marrying, saying: "It is good for a man to remain unmarried; . . . Yet, if their desires do not allow them to remain contented in this state, let them marry"³: Secondly, he is careful to limit his advice against marriage to the distress then present, or nigh at hand, saying: "I think, then, it is best, by reason of the trials which are nigh at hand, for all to be unmarried; [so that I would say to each]: If thou art bound to a wife, seek not separation; but if thou art free, seek not marriage; yet if thou wilt marry, thou mayest do so without sin."³ Should any one quote Paul's advice against marriage in order to

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 8-12.

² 1 Cor. vii. 1-10; 26-28.

³ Conybeare and Howson's Translation.

support some socialistic theory, it could be conclusively replied, that Paul limited his advice to the distress then nigh at hand, and that, even then, he did not prohibit, but expressly allowed, marriage to those who desired it.

Now, if Paul had in like manner founded his positive command, that women should keep silence in the churches, upon either existing customs, or some present exigency, or some other transient foundation, we could rightly argue, that, with a change in the reason of the command, the command itself is abolished; but, even then, the change in the reason of the command must be so great as wholly to destroy the force of the command. But we look in vain for any such transient reasons in the passages under consideration. On the contrary, the reasons given, the foundations laid, are as extensive, both in space and in time, as the existence of the human family, and as permanent as the law of the sexes. Addressing a church made disorderly through the Grecian fondness for speaking, which affected the women, as well as the men, Paul secures order by commanding the men to speak in turn for the edification of the church, and by prohibiting positively, expressly, repeatedly, and unqualifiedly, the women from speaking at all. He does not confine the prohibition to a particular church or country, present custom, or other temporary thing. The command, like the reason of it, is universal: "As in all churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches, as also saith the law."¹ Silence in the churches is a part of woman's obedience or subjection, announced in the curse uttered at the gate of Eden by God upon woman. This reason, to which Paul refers, is as permanent and extensive as the race itself. Customs change, nations rise and fall; but, so long as man is made male and female, the reason of the prohibition exists unimpaired, and of course the prohibition itself abides in full force.

Again, Paul, writing to a minister of the new and better covenant, instructs him how he ought to behave himself "in

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 33, 34, correctly punctuated.

the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." In his directions to this pastor, he gives, as the reason why women should not be allowed to speak or teach in the churches: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression."¹ The priority of Adam in the creation, and the fact that Eve was deceived, and was first in the transgression, are reasons, however explained, which no times, or dispensations, or anything else, can change. Manifestly, they are permanent and universal. They have nothing to do with usages, or customs, or times.

Let those who would remove this limitation of silence from women grapple with the reasons given for it by the inspired apostle. To avoid them, and to talk—however learnedly and truly—about changes in the customs of the age and the countries in which Paul lived and labored, is as relevant as to talk about the changes of the moon, and not a whit more so. It avails nothing to discant upon changes in something, upon which something nothing whatever has been founded. The prohibition of the apostle is not built upon the sand of custom, shifted hither and thither by the waves of time; but on the rock of man's creation and fall, which nothing can change or destroy. It is, then, not only idle, but silly in the extreme, to say that the sand has shifted since Paul founded his prohibition upon the rock.

III. The parts of public worship respecting which silence is enjoined upon women.

Is it not a little remarkable that the words usually translated in the New Testament "to preach" (*κηρύσσω*, "primarily, to officiate as a herald, to teach publicly, to preach" used sixty-one times, translated "to preach" fifty-four times; *εὐαγγελίζω*, "to bring good news, to announce glad tidings," used fifty-five times, translated "to preach" forty-eight times; and *καταγγέλλω*, "to bring word down to any one,

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14.

to announce, to set forth," used seventeen times, translated "to preach" ten times),—is it not strange, if preaching alone be prohibited, that neither of these words, which are used by the sacred writers, in almost every instance, to describe the act of preaching, are used in either passage where silence is enjoined upon women? Instead of these, words far more general and comprehensive are employed, including preaching as the genus includes its species.

In the passage in 1st Timothy, Paul uses a word which is never translated "to preach," but whose true signification is given in the authorized version, "to teach"; namely, διδάσκω, "to teach, to instruct," used ninety-seven times, and in every instance translated "to teach"; while in 1st Corinthians Paul makes the prohibition as sweeping as it is possible to make it, by employing a word (λαλέω, "to talk, chatter, babble)," which includes all kinds of speaking. It is translated "to preach" only six times out of two hundred and ninety-four times in which it is employed in the New Testament. Twice, in this passage, he uses the widest, most comprehensive of all terms, in enjoining silence upon women. It is certain, then, if anything can be made certain by the use of words, that teaching and speaking by women in the churches are expressly forbidden. But these include preaching, as the greater includes the less, the genus the species; therefore preaching is also forbidden to women.¹

¹ Should it be said that λαλέω, in 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35, retains somewhat of its original signification, and that Paul, therefore, meant to forbid only all *babbling* and *lawling*, while seemly discourse was allowed to the women in the churches; then we reply: (1) *The usage of the word in the New Testament is conclusive on the point.* It is found two hundred and ninety-four times; four times it is translated by the verb "to utter;" six times, "to preach;" twelve times, "to tell;" twelve times, "to talk;" fourteen times, "to say;" and two hundred and forty-six times, "to speak." Two hundred and eighty-four times, apart from the passage in question, it refers to *persons* speaking; three times, Rev. x. 3, 4, to intelligible thunders, which John is forbidden to write; three times, Rev. xiii. 5, 11, 15, to the beast and his image, which blasphemed God; once, to the Law; and once to the blood of Christ, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Of the two hundred and ninety-two times in which the word is used, apart from the passage in question, only once can it be rendered "babble," without violence; and even there it is extremely doubtful. Paul says: "When

They are not even permitted to ask questions in the churches; but, if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; ¹ “for it is a shame for women to speak [*λαλέω*, which includes all speaking, even the asking of questions] in the church.”

Is prophesying forbidden to women, the same as all other speaking? Let us appeal to the scriptures for the answer. “To prophesy is to act as prophet, to foretell future events, to predict; but often including, also, from the Hebrew, the idea of exhorting, reproving, threatening, or, indeed, the whole utterance of the prophets, while acting under divine influence, as ambassadors of God and interpreters of his mind and will.” “Specifically, it is used of the prophetic gift, or *charisma*, imparted by the Holy Spirit to the primitive Christians.” ²

This definition, be it observed, involves the idea of inspiration — a supernatural influence upon the mind of the prophet. But, as the words of Joel — “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . .

I was a child, I spake (babbled) as a child.” (2) *The context is equally against such a meaning.* In 1 Cor. xiv. it is used several times of the gift of tongues which “no man understandeth” (v. 2): but this speaking was not *babbling* or anything of the kind; for Paul says (v. 5), “I would that ye all spake with tongues;” and, (v. 13) “Let him that speaketh in a tongue, pray that he may *interpret*;” and again, (v. 18) “I thank my God, I speak with tongues (*babble*?) more than ye all.” (3) Neither Robinson in his *New Test. Lexicon*, nor any translation or commentary, that we have seen, gives such a meaning to the word in this passage. (4) Granting, however, that it might have this signification here, the command which must be held and treated as a command of the Lord, “Let your women *keep silence* in the churches,” covers scantly speech as fully as it does babbling.

¹ What if they have no husbands; or if their husbands are unable or unwilling to answer them? As the seclusive customs of those days have given place to better ones, if they cannot consult qualified and willing husbands to their satisfaction, it is perfectly proper for them now to ask their pastor, or the deacons of their church, or any Christian who is competent to instruct them. Only it must be done in private, and not in the public assembly. Besides, commentaries are now so common and cheap, that no pious woman need live long in doubt respecting either a point of doctrine or of practice.

² Robinson's *Lexicon*. See also Hackett on Acts ii. 17.

And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids, in those days, will I pour out my Spirit" — are popularly quoted as foretelling a time when all, male and female, should participate alike in the worship of God in the churches, it becomes necessary to examine carefully the scriptural idea of prophesying. For if the definition already quoted be found to be correct, then only those who have a supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost resting upon them can claim to prophesy at all.

The word translated "to prophesy" in the New Testament (*προφητεύω*, found twenty-eight times, and translated in every instance "to prophesy") is used in the following connections: once, of the rejected false prophets, who claimed to have prophesied in the name of Christ;¹ three times, by the soldiers who mocked Jesus;² five times, of the Old Testament prophets;³ once, of Zacharias;⁴ once, of Caiaphas the high-priest;⁵ once, of the Apostle John;⁶ once, of the two witnesses mentioned by John;⁷ ten times, of the *charisma*, or supernatural gift, as is proved by its close connection with the gift of tongues, which is admitted by all to have been a supernatural gift.⁸ Twenty-three, then, out of the twenty-eight times, clearly assert or imply a supernatural or miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit. Of the five remaining times, one refers to the virgin daughters of Philip,⁹ but in such connection as most naturally to imply a supernatural gift. For "a certain prophet named Agabus" is immediately introduced as predicting what should befall Paul at Jerusalem, which he could not have done without such supernatural gift. Two occur in Peter's quotation from Joel,¹⁰ which quotation he made to vindicate the apostles from the charge of drunkenness, and to account for the gift of tongues, which gift was then first bestowed on the church. Here Joel's prediction is expressly declared to have been

¹ Matt. vii. 22.

² Matt. xxvi. 68; Mark. xiv. 65; Luke xxii. 64.

³ Matt. xi. 13; xv. 7; Mark vii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 10; Jude 14.

⁴ Luke i. 67.

⁵ John xi. 51.

⁶ Rev. x. 11.

⁷ Rev. xi. 3.

⁸ Acts xix. 6; 1 Cor. xiii. 9; xiv. 1, 3, 4, 5 twice, 24, 31, 39.

⁹ Acts xxi. 9.

¹⁰ Acts ii. 17, 18.

fulfilled in the bestowment of a supernatural gift, which continued for many years with the church, and which was imparted to women, as well as men. Only two passages now remain, in which prophesying is joined with praying: "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head: but every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head."¹ Now, there is nothing here, or in the context, to indicate that the prophesying referred to was exceptional in its nature. The fact that the word is joined with praying furnishes no evidence against its being used in its ordinary sense. For the apostle may have used both terms to cover all parts of the service—what in the primitive churches was inspired, and what was uninspired—in order to show that the law of propriety applies alike to both kinds. Prophesying is never used in the New Testament for preaching, or for mere speaking in meeting, unless it be so used in the two instances last quoted; but the *usus loquendi* of the word is conclusive against an exceptional meaning in these verses.

The same conclusion is reached when we take the noun *προφήτης*, which is found one hundred and forty-nine times in the New Testament, and is translated in every instance, "prophet." It is used ninety-two times of the Old Testament prophets; seventeen, of Christ; eight, of John the Baptist; once, of Balaam; nine, of "a prophet," used indefinitely; five, of an order of ministries in the primitive churches, being found in the catalogue of "apostles, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing," etc.; seven, in the Apocalypse, of both Old and New Testament prophets; once, of the revelator's "two witnesses"; once, of a Grecian poet; while four times it is joined with the gift of tongues, in such manner as to imply a miraculous gift. In the remaining four passages, the presumption is certainly overwhelming that reference is had to a special miraculous gift.

Thus it is shown that in no one passage in the New Testament can either the verb *προφητεύω*, or the noun *προφήτης*

¹ Cor. xi. 4, 5.

be proved to refer to or to include ordinary preaching or speaking ; but, in almost every instance, both the noun and the verb expressly involve the idea of a supernatural influence or miraculous gift. Of the passages which are less determinate in the use of these words, all but the one that refers to the Grecian poet harmonize perfectly with the idea of such supernatural power. Our translators so understood the words ; hence, they never translated *προφήτης*, “ a teacher, or a preacher, or an apostle ” ; but always “ a prophet ” ; and *προφητεύω*, “ to teach, or preach, or speak ” ; but always “ to prophesy.” There is perfect uniformity in the use of these words, both among the writers of the New Testament, and also among the translators of the authorized version. The definition, therefore, with which we started, is found to be correct. To prophesy involves the idea of a supernatural gift, a divine influence qualifying for the work.

Now God poured out his Spirit upon all flesh, so that men and women did prophesy in the primitive churches. And the question arises : Were those women who were endued with the supernatural gift of prophecy commanded to be in silence in the churches ? This question is answered by Paul, in 1 Cor. xiv. The whole chapter is taken up in discussing the order of worship in the churches for the purpose of correcting certain abuses. The gift of prophecy is contrasted with the gift of tongues, and its superiority to the latter gift shown. Believers were to desire especially to prophesy, in order that they might edify the church. They were told in what order to exercise the gift in their meetings : “ Let the prophets speak, two or three,” that is, in turn, one after the other ; while those who had the gift of tongues were ordered to keep silence, unless an interpreter were present to explain what they should say. Then, in the midst of these injunctions respecting the use of the supernatural gifts of prophecy and of tongues, Paul says : “ As in all churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches ; for it is not permitted unto them to speak ; for it is a shame for women to speak in the

churches." This is unequivocal and conclusive. In a discussion respecting prophecy and the gift of tongues, Paul forbids women to speak at all in the churches. Of course, then, he forbids them to prophesy and to speak with the gift of tongues in the assembly. If a woman had a divine afflatus, an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, qualifying her to prophesy or to speak with tongues, she was ordered to be silent in the churches; for "the spirits of the prophets are subject unto the prophets." Prophesying, then, as well as preaching and speaking, is expressly forbidden to women in the churches.

Are women forbidden to lead the assembly in the service of prayer? Prayer, in its nature, is different from speaking, preaching, or prophesying. "It is an address to God"; and in the offering of it there is no assumption of superiority over men. Hence, so far as the law of subordination or subjection is concerned, there would seem to be no impropriety in women's leading the assembly in this part of the service. Still, the passage in 1st Timothy seems to have prayer under discussion, as the one in 1st Corinthians has prophesying and the speaking with tongues. The passage opens thus: "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men [*ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων*] I will, therefore, that men [*τοὺς ἀνδρας*, excluding women] pray everywhere [*ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ*]. . . . In like manner, also [that is, I will], that women [*γυναῖκας*, excluding men] adorn themselves in modest apparel," etc. Then he adds: "Let the woman [*γυνή*, "a woman,"; English idiom, "the woman" — Ellicott] learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, but to be in silence."¹

Is silence here enjoined upon women respecting public prayer? The answer to this depends upon the answer which we give to the following question, namely: Did Paul, in his argument, advance from prayer, first to the becoming dress and deportment of the women, and then to their silence;

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 8, 9, 11, 12.

both forgetting the distinction he had made between males and females in the matter of prayer, and forbidding something of which he had not been speaking at all? Or did he retain the subject-matter in mind, namely, prayer, when he said: "Let the woman learn in silence," and then proceed from this injunction to another, "when he added: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, but to be in silence"? That the latter supposition is the true one, seems clear from the logical character of the apostle's mind, and from his use of the particle *δέ*, translated "but." Prayer "for all men" (*ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων*, for all, male and female) is required of men (*τοὺς ἀνδρας*, only males) everywhere (*ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ*); while women (*γυναῖκας*), in contrast, are required to adorn themselves becomingly, and to be in silence. Now, as nothing had been said about preaching, or prophesying, or speaking with or without the gift of tongues, or teaching, it seems logically conclusive that the silence enjoined in this passage upon women respected public prayer. Paul puts this, however, beyond question, by following the injunction of silence with the adversative particle *δέ*, which denotes "that the word or clause with which it stands is to be distinguished from something preceding. It thus marks a transition to something else."¹ "*Δέ* connects, while it contrasts, i.e. adds another particular different from what precedes. . . . Nor does it ever serve as a mere copula or particle of transition."² Had Paul meant precisely the same thing in the sentence introduced by *δέ* that he did in the sentence preceding it, he would have used some other particle, for example, *γάρ*, "for"; and the sentence would have read: "Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection; *for* I suffer not a woman to teach," etc. But the *δέ* shows that there is something in the second sentence to be distinguished from something in the first. So our translators understood it, and so, grammatically, it must be understood. Now, what is that something in the first sentence from which the teaching of the second is to be distinguished as "something

¹ Robinson's Lexicon.² Thayer's Winer's N. T. Gram. 442, 453.

else"? Was it preaching, speaking, prophesying, as distinguished from teaching? Not one word had been said in the context about any or all of these. Paul had been speaking only of prayer, to be offered by males everywhere; and to prayer he must have referred when he laid silence upon women in the churches, and from which δέ marks a transition to "another particular, different from what precedes."

Conybeare and Howson, indeed, translate the passage as follows: "Likewise, also, that the women *should come* in seemly apparel, adorned," etc.; and add, in a note, that "after *γυναῖκας* we must supply *προσεύχασθαι* [as Chrysostom does], or something equivalent." It may be objected to *προσεύχασθαι*, first, that it subverts the accurate use of the particle δέ in the twelfth verse; secondly, that it introduces into the sentence an unnecessary infinitive; thirdly, that it reduces the infinitive, *κοσμεῖν*, to a participle. These far outweigh the reasons for supplying it; for *γυναῖκας* can be made the subject of *κοσμεῖν*, without violation of grammatical rules. Conybeare and Howson supply *προσέρχασθαι* ("should come"), and Oosterzee suggests *προσευχόμενας* (praying); but neither of these is necessary. The former leaves the particle δέ (v. 12) in full force, while the latter weakens the force of δέ by so much as it implies that the praying may be done in public. It is best to supply nothing.

It appears, then, that the several parts of public worship respecting which silence has been laid upon women are preaching, teaching, prophesying, speaking, and praying. If there be doubt respecting any one of these, that doubt touches only the service of prayer.

IV. The kind of meetings in which silence is enjoined upon women.

What is the meaning, in the passages under consideration, of the word translated "church"? In determining its signification, we are to make use of neither conjecture nor arbitrary rules; for the context and the usage of the word

in the New Testament are our final and conclusive appeal. To this narrow point has the discussion been now reduced.

The word *ἐκκλησία*, "church," is found one hundred and fifteen times in the New Testament. Once, of a popular or other assembly legally called; twice, of a tumultuous assembly of the people, or mob; twice, "in the Jewish sense, of a congregation or assembly of the people on solemn occasions, or for worship"; eighteen times, of the church universal, the spiritual church of God; and ninety-two times, of assemblies of Christians worshipping together, of local or particular churches.

Sometimes the idea conveyed by the word is more radical than at other times, i.e. it refers to the calling together, or to the assembled body of believers, to their meetings, and not so much to an organized body distinguished from some other like body and from the surrounding unbelievers. Sometimes the assemblies of Christians, which are called churches, were small organic bodies, meeting in private houses, and designated by the names of those with whom they met. While once the Christian assembly or congregation is called a synagogue.

The question of silence turns, however, on the precise meaning of *ἐκκλησία*, in 1 Cor. xiv. 33-35. Does it here mean the congregation assembled for worship? Or does it refer to the congregation in its organic business assemblies, or meetings? The context must determine what meetings are here meant, and in what assemblies silence is enjoined.

This passage does not occur in connection with any directions, warnings, or commands touching the business or duties of a church in its organic capacity and relations. The two preceding chapters are given to the discussion of spiritual gifts, and the succeeding to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which had been called in question; while this whole fourteenth chapter is devoted to "directions for the exercise of the gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues," in order to correct certain abuses in their public worship. Paul gives the order in which these gifts may be

exercised: "If there be any who speak in tongues, let not more than two, or at the most three, speak [in the same assembly]; and let them speak in turn; and let the same interpreter explain the words of all." "Of those that have the gift of prophecy, let two or three speak [in each assembly], and let the rest judge." They are exhorted to desire especially the gift of prophecy; for this gift builds up the church; it edifies; while the gift of tongues, unless some one interpret, builds up or edifies the speaker alone. "Therefore, let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may be able to interpret what he utters." "But if there be no interpreter, let him who speaks in tongues keep silence in the congregation, and speak in private to himself and God alone." "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."¹

Now, these directions refer, not to the order of business, but to the order of worship in the assembly — to an order of worship in nature dissimilar to our preaching service, but very similar to our prayer and conference meetings; at which not one, and he a minister set apart to the work by the laying on of hands, but many, can properly take part. Certainly a meeting in which two or three having the gift of prophecy, and two or three having the gift of tongues, are permitted to speak, besides the interpretation of the tongues, the singing, and the praying, is — apart from its supernatural gifts — a modern prayer and conference meeting. Our social meetings are, indeed, the true successors of the devotional meetings of the primitive churches. It is in such meetings that silence is enjoined upon women; not conditionally, as upon the gift of tongues; but unconditionally, upon all the women of the Corinthian church, "as in all the churches of the saints."

The primitive Christians met together at first every day for worship, for the breaking of bread, and for prayers. Their meetings were not as formal as they afterwards became. Some churches, however, abused their liberty, calling

¹ Conybeare and Howson's translation.

out from the apostle the directions already cited, which furnish us the clearest proof that Paul referred to other than business meetings, when he said: "As in all churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches." He does not mean those meetings held on the Lord's day in the Temple, or in a large upper room, or in a private house; but those which assembled, sometimes in one place and sometimes in another, on week days, as well as on the Lord's day, not for business only, but also for Christian worship. It is impossible to make this passage cover only the business meetings of the churches. No such limitation can be put upon *ἐκκλησία*; while the context extends the word to every meeting of believers for worship where both sexes are present.

As the other passage (1 Tim. ii. 11, 12) enjoins silence upon women in the service of prayer, and in that of teaching, it naturally refers to the ordinary worshipping assemblies of the saints. But this is put beyond dispute by Paul's own words; for he afterwards says to Timothy: "These things write I unto thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God."¹

We conclude, therefore, that the kind of meetings in which women are commanded to keep silence is every sort of religious meetings where both sexes are present.

V. No conclusive objection can be raised against this command and practice of silence for woman in the churches.

As we have already shown, the prediction that in the last days daughters and maid-servants should prophesy, refers to miraculous gifts, and had its fulfilment on the day of Pentecost, in the virgin daughters of Philip, and in other female prophets. We have no evidence that the prediction referred either to an ordinary gift of speech or to a permanent institution in the church of Christ. On the contrary, we have the strongest proof that it referred to a miraculous gift, which gift was itself laid by the apostle under the injunction

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

of silence in the churches. Certainly there is nothing here that makes against the view which has been presented.

Much unnecessary difficulty has been experienced by some respecting the "woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered."¹ Paul, for the time, seems to allow the practice while he condemns the manner of its performance; but afterwards he forbids the practice itself. This does not indicate either a vacillating or contradictory course in Paul; for, in the one and earlier passage, he may have allowed an existing custom to pass unrebuked, while he called attention to the indecency of its performance; and, having rebuked the indecency, he may, later and in another part of the same letter, have forbidden the custom itself. This course would be rhetorical, and in accordance with Paul's rule for the winning of men. "For," as Calvin says, "the apostle by condemning the one does not commend the other." Surely no man can seriously venture to place the mere and brief statement of a practice in equal authority with an explicit and repeated command, which command, by its letter and its spirit, forever destroys the rightful existence of that practice, both respecting prophesying and praying in the churches.

It is said, "Let it be noted that these directions were given to Greek churches." "How far were the Corinthian and Ephesian women entitled to represent the women of the present day?"² In reply, let it be noted that the most approved punctuation of the passage in 1st Corinthians shows that these directions, if given, were not limited, to Greek churches; for it reads: "as in all churches of the saints, let your woman keep silence in the churches." Even Dr. Clarke says: "This was a Jewish ordinance." The directions were as widely extended as the churches of the saints. Now the question, how far the women, not of Corinth and of Ephesus alone, but of all the primitive churches, were entitled to represent the women of the present day, depends wholly on the answer given to a previous question, namely: Of what are they called to be representatives? Of customs? Paul

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 13. ² Rev. C.W. Torrey, *Congregational Quarterly*, Vol. ix. 164.
Vol. XXVII. No. 106.

has not thus used them. Of the relation of women to men as such? Then they may stand as our representatives, and what was laid upon them in obedience to this relation, falls with equal force upon women of the present day. The question is not, How far? but, In what respect? and Paul is careful to answer this conclusively. Mr. Torrey again says: "The reasons for the injunction have ceased, and of consequence it is not now binding. *Ratione cessante, cessat lex*" (p. 167). All very true of the reasons which he so modestly assumes to put into the mouth of Paul; but not in one particular true of the reasons which Paul himself gives for the command; to which reasons Mr. Torrey does not even condescend to allude throughout his whole article. On the same improved principles of interpretation, there is neither doctrine, precept, prohibition, nor rite of any sort, that could be saved to the church. If his only canon of interpretation, namely, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," has the latitude here given it — putting reasons into the mouth of an inspired apostle for the sake of plucking them out again; while utterly ignoring the reasons which the same apostle in the same passages expressly gives — then the whole letter of God's word disappears forever before the new spirit which is seeking to give life.

But, "the voice of women adds interest to the social meetings of the church." It may be so; but, are those churches which allow women to speak and pray in their meetings distinguished above those which do not allow the practice, for stability, strength, and the growth of every Christian grace? Besides, shall a clear prohibition be set aside in order to promote interest in our meetings? Where would such a principle lead? "Women do good and save immortal souls by their speaking and praying in public." We do not deny it; for their silence is not an essential part of the gospel plan. Hence God blesses those whose lives and hearts are otherwise right. But we do not hesitate to say that they could do as much, yea more good, and save more souls, too, if they would bring their labors for Christ

within the limits which he himself has imposed upon them.

“There are cases,” it is said, “in which the continuance of a church or of a social meeting depends upon the violation of this injunction of silence; shall the church or meeting die, or the injunction be violated?” Calvin long ago answered: “This (rule) we must understand as referring to ordinary service, or where there is a church in a regularly constituted state; for a necessity may occur of such a nature as to require that a woman should speak in public; but Paul has merely in view what is becoming in a duly regulated assembly.” These practical difficulties do not annul the prohibition as the law ordained for the churches, any more than the difficulties which sometimes attend the public confession of Christ make void the believer’s obligation publicly to profess him.

“The world has outgrown such narrow views, and is emancipating the churches from their thralldom.” Is not man still born male and female? Was not Eve deceived and first in the transgression? ‘But, what of that?’ it may be said. Solemnly do we urge you to reflect before you despise God’s revealed law respecting the relation of the sexes. The honor belongs to the Bible of elevating woman to the noble companionship of man which she now enjoys, notwithstanding the restrictions which it lays upon her. It enjoins, moreover, every right attempt to redress the remaining wrongs done her. But that redress must agree with the law of her relationship, otherwise those wrongs will be increased manyfold by the attempt. ‘But, it is a question of rights, not of relationship.’ True, but human rights arise from human relations, and rest on those relations as their only and sure foundation. And, has not Paul, in the passages enforcing silence upon women, given the relation of man to woman in the law of their creation? As a matter of fact, are women equal to men in strength and fitness for all positions and pursuits in life? Have not some who defied the law of their womanhood, at last yielded to it, and obeyed Paul, when he

said: "I will, therefore, that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully?"¹ Under the influence of the blessed gospel, the world will outgrow all wrongs, and come into closer harmony with God's law, both natural and revealed.

"Will not this reasoning apply to singing and to teaching in the Sunday-school?" Singing has, like speaking, peculiar words to express it; but we look in vain for them in these prohibitions. To make the argument apply, then, to singing, is to go beyond what is written. The same is true of teaching in Sunday-schools. Such teaching is not in the assemblies which Paul had in view, or in assemblies so like them as to fall under the same principle and the same condemnation. The argument cannot thus be bent until it breaks.

"As for women, they have been queens, and generals, and sailors, and soldiers, and doctors, and priests, and class-leaders, and we see not why they may not become preachers in the Methodist Episcopal church."² Did the editor never read 1 Cor. xiv. 33-38 and 1 Tim. ii. 11-15? We would commend these passages to his careful, honest, and prayerful examination; and if then he can see no reason why woman should not preach in any church subject to the will and law of Christ Jesus, we will leave him to the strange logic of his attempted reasoning.³

¹ 1 Tim. v. 14.

² Zion's Herald, July 1st, 1869.

³ It is worthy of special note, that the interpretation of these passages formerly held is most emphatically confirmed by the ablest expositors who have written since the apostle's commands have been openly set at nought by some churches. See, for example, Broomfield, Hodge, Barnes, Olshausen, Conybeare and Howson, Stanley, Ellicott, Kling, and Oosterzee in Lange's commentaries. See also the translations of Noyes, Sawyer.

On the other side of the question we find Dr. Adam Clarke; but he is guilty of changing the fact that women *did* prophesy in public into the permission that "some women *might* prophesy" in the assembly; also of making prophesying equivalent to teaching; also of turning speaking (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35) into "asking questions, and what we call dictating, in the assemblies"; and of saying: "All that the apostle opposes here is their questioning, finding fault, etc., in the Christian church.

Surely, in our interpretation of the New Testament, we are utterly at sea,

None of these objections has much weight ; and surely no one or all of them, or any others that can be found, can assume to stand for one moment against a positive, explicit, repeated, and universal command of God. Who, sitting with the Almighty, shall abrogate this law for the churches of Christ? Just here the argument impinges with such force that those who advocate the speaking of women in the churches, seek to avoid its force by weakening or by destroying the inspiration of the commands of silence. On this attempt consider :

VI. It is no trifling matter to ignore or set at nought the teachings of scripture respecting the silence of women in the churches.

Paul did not so regard it ; for he adds to his injunction this solemn caution : “ Was it from you that the word of God was first sent forth ? Or are you the only church that it has reached ? Nay, if any think that he has the gift of prophecy, or that he is a spiritual man, let him acknowledge the words which I write for commands of the Lord Jesus. But if any man refuse this acknowledgment, let him refuse it at his own peril.”¹ These, be it remembered, are the words of warning with which the inspired apostle closes his directions for the order of worship which enjoin silence upon women. Hence they have primary and special reference to these directions. Paul does not rank the matter among the things indifferent, of which he says : “ Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” But, instead : “ If any man refuse to acknowledge these injunctions of silence for commands of the Lord Jesus, let him refuse it at his own peril.” If *ἀγνοεῖται* be the true reading (Stanley), the meaning is startling : “ He is ignored by God ; God is ignorant of him.” If *ἀγνοεῖτω*, the received reading, be the true one (and Tischendorf countenances no other), then it means : with neither chart nor compass to guide us, if its writers made such a loose use of words as Dr. Clarke here implies. Nothing they taught could be made certain.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 36–38. Conybeare and Howson’s translation.

“Let him be ignorant” — “a contemptuous expression of indifference as to the opinion of such an one, however great his pretensions.” Do not all who, for popularity or policy, or any other reason, seek to parry Paul’s prohibition by calling him a bachelor, and by saying, that were he alive now he would write differently on this subject, incur the apostle’s censure? Such attempts strike at the root of inspiration. They undermine the whole Bible; and sad indeed will be the harvest gathered from this evil sowing. Where learn they that Paul was a bachelor? In what single instance does he rest a command, or prohibition, or anything else, on so strange a foundation? Where does he enjoin silence upon women in the churches by reason of present custom or present distress? It is perilous to speak and write as many do on this subject. If Paul was inspired, as he claimed to be in one of these passages, and as we must hold him to have been in them all, then the reasons he renders for the silence of women in the churches are as true as they are permanent, and are worthy of all acceptance as commands of the Lord Jesus. If he was not inspired when he uttered them, let some one show it, and end the controversy and unloose the tongues of women in the public assembly at the same stroke. But pause, first, and tell us why every doctrine Paul taught, every precept he gave, every command he uttered, every word he said, cannot also be set aside, as null and void, on precisely the same grounds? Why, on this theory, may not the atonement of the Son of God have been a mere mode of thought suited only to the times in which it was announced? regeneration, a requirement for the times? the church and its rites, an institution for the times? heaven and hell, mere figments of the imagination, engendered by the times, and for the times? the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, a revelation from God for the times? And why, as the times have changed, may not the reasons for all these have ceased, and they themselves, of consequence, be no longer binding? Away with such arguments! It is neither befitting a scholar, nor

a pious man, nor an interpreter of scripture, nor a teacher or preacher of the oracles of God, thus to trifle with the reasons given by an inspired apostle as the ground of an inspired prohibition. Only three honorable ways are open to a man: Either let him show that the reasons given by Paul for the command of silence do no longer exist, — in other words, that the history of man's creation and fall is a myth; or, failing in this, let him, like a true man and Christian, conform to the prohibition as now in full force; or, what God forbid that any one should do, let him deny the inspiration of Paul, spurn the prohibition and the reasons for it alike, and be guided solely by reason and experience. But even then he would run against that great law which, in the whole animal creation, subordinates, in strength, and generally in beauty, the female to the male. He would reject the word of God, only to be held and bound by the law of God in creation. He cannot give to woman man's voice, so that it shall be easy and pleasant for her to speak in public. Neither can he render it proper, or even possible, for women to appear in public at all times and in all conditions. Silence in the assemblies is imposed upon woman during much of her life by the law of her being, if she discharge her appointed functions as a wife and mother. Paul only makes universal a law which nature makes partial. But this third alternative no true Christian will ever take. He, from his relation to God and to his word, is shut up either to the first or to the second alternative. If he cannot prove Paul's reasons for the command of silence to have been temporary in their nature, and to have already passed away, he is bound by his fealty to God to conform to the letter and spirit of the prohibition, "as the commands of the Lord Jesus," as the law of all his churches. To refuse to acknowledge them as such, is to incur the solemn censure of the Master.