

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER II. VERSES 9-15.

AFTER enjoining on Timothy prayer for all men, because God loves all men, the Apostle appears to make, in verse 9, a strange transition to commonplace and small detail. A glance at the condition of the Ephesian Church will shew, however, that it may have been a matter of transcendent importance. There are many indications in Paul's Epistles that the emancipation of woman, effected to some extent by his own teaching, had borne some bitter fruit. In Philippi certain ladies had taken a prominent and alarming position. They had, moreover, been unable to agree in the views and practices of the Church, and were threatening it with disruption. Paul's doctrine that in Christ Jesus there was neither male nor female, that both were one in Him (Gal. iii. 28), was not intended by the Apostle to obliterate the fundamental relations of the sexes; but it was abused into license and perverted into sin. From the seclusion of the Eastern Haram, from the concealment practised in the Jewish synagogue, the Christian woman had felt herself called to public appearance and self-manifestation. The attractions of the female voice and prophetic song, which combined the mystery of the priestess of Apollo and Artemis with the familiarity of Christian communion, in a city where theatres, gymnasia, and temples abounded, where the Hetairæ were a recognized and respectable class in society, might have occasioned boundless possibilities of evil. It seems fair to infer that, unwarned by the example

of Corinth, the Ephesian ladies came in dazzling attire, and with some display of their personal charms, into the Christian society, making a sensation, if not creating a scandal; if so, it becomes perfectly easy to conceive that Paul could hardly think of the prayer and praise of the Christian assembly without uttering some words of wise and necessary admonition.

In like manner (I desire, understood or carried forward from the previous sentence) that the women adorn themselves (in every place of worship and prayer especially) in appropriate apparel, with inward modesty and self-control. Archbishop Trench distinguishes *αἰδώς* from *αἰσχύνη*, shewing that the former word, here used and translated "modesty," from its etymology, represents a disposition which turns away with inward loathing from that which is evil, as that which cannot be even looked upon or thought about. The great word *σωφροσύνη*, according to Plato, is "the strength of the soul," the sound-mindedness which exercises supreme control over passion and pleasure.¹ These characteristics are a rich adornment; they imply a deep sense of what is evil; no secret pleasure in that which is externally reprobated, but an inward disgust and a true self-mastery.

Paul even sets the Christian ladies of Ephesus a lesson in matters in which they probably thought that he had no right to interfere. He condemned

¹ Xenophon does not give such force to the former word as to the latter. "The modest" are those who avoid the *appearance* of what is shameful; the "sound-minded" avoid it in its most secret and invisible haunts.

“plaitings [of hair], and gold and pearls and costly garments.” These peculiarities are condemned in nearly the same words by St. Peter (1 Epistle iii. 3); and, in all probability, the words point to a display in the Christian assembly which the Apostle thought inconsistent with the spirituality, the unworldliness, the sound-mindedness, the sanctity of the Church of God.

Luther, Calvin, Mack, Huther, connect the *δι' ἔργων ἀγαθῶν* with the previous word *ἐπαγγελομέναις*, and would translate it thus: “*but* [let them adorn themselves in that] *which is befitting women who profess godliness through [or by] good works.*” This construction is awkward, while it is equally grammatical (with Ellicott and others) to connect “the good works” with the principal verb, and translate it as follows: “*but* [let them adorn themselves] *with good works* [a proceeding or habit] *which befits those who are professing godliness.* The beauty of holiness, the glory of goodness, the charms of purity, modesty, and self-control were in the Apostle’s mind when he said, “There is neither male nor female: ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Verse 11.—“*Let woman learn, not taking upon her to teach, in the Church, even if her prophetic voice, all through the history of the kingdom of God, must be listened to. Let her learn in silence or in tranquillity; not that she is not to ask questions, at any time or in any place: but so far as the house of God is concerned, let her disposition to learn reveal itself in every kind of subjection. Her strength is in her submission. Her far-reaching sway over man is legitimately exercised by her receptivity; by her*

yielding up her own will ; not by her self-assertion and conspicuous activity. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Woman's glory is her meekness ; her authority is in her love. The might of self-sacrifice, of self-submission, of self-abnegation, of "every kind of subjection," reached its highest expression in Christ. Paul would have woman put forth the loftiest idea of the Divine life.

Verse 12.—Here is a practical development of the principle, which was at that moment in the history of the Church of vital importance : "*I do not permit woman to teach or exercise authority over men, but [I do¹ exhort them] to be in tranquillity or silence.*" The word here used for the "exercise of authority" is a very unusual word, and is only found in later Greek. It is used for one who exercises authority even with murderous intent, and implies considerable and special force in the manifestation of it. A vehement exertion of female influence in the Christian assembly, and public instruction for the Church by woman's voice, were resented and condemned by Paul. The Apostle was equally explicit on other occasions. If any section of the Church or society be eager to render legitimate a violation of the rule which has largely pervaded Christendom from Apostolic times, it is dishonest and idle to try and explain away the judgment of St. Paul with reference to what was fitting in the early Church.

In *verse 13* the Apostle goes back to Eden for a justification of his doctrine, and we have another proof, not that he was blinded by his Rabbinical

¹ Cf. for this construction Chap. iv. ver. 3.

education, but that he was, by deeply ingrained habit of thought, accustomed to regard the facts and principles of the Old Testament as symbolic and parabolic, and the source of perpetual instruction. The reason that he gave for the Christian bearing of the two sexes toward each other was the fundamental illustration of their mutual relations furnished by the most sacred and venerable fragment of the Old Testament. *For*, says the Apostle, *Adam was first fashioned, then Eve*. The word translated "fashioned" is that used in LXX. (Gen. ii. 7),¹ and implies pre-existing material, without excluding a long and even laborious process. Humanity was complete and centred in a personal unity before the separation of the sexes. The Apostle points thus not merely to priority in point of time, but to superiority in respect of immediate relation with God. Adam's function was to teach and to rule in virtue of that superiority. It is further added, *and Adam was not deceived: i.e.*, his eyes were open to the magnitude of his sin; he was over-persuaded by conjugal love. He knew what he was doing, and hence his transgression was more blameworthy. But though there was a greater sin committed by Adam than by his wife, there was greater power; *but the typical woman* is branded with the condemnation of impulsive weakness, and *having been deceived* or seduced into actually believing a lie, and disbelieving the voice of the Lord, *has become* the prey of and involved *in the transgression*.² Having

¹ Cf. Rom. ix. 20; 2 Macc. vii. 23.

² The form of construction is not uncommon in the New Testament: Luke xxii. 44; Phil ii. 7.

exercised authority over the man, she fell under the curse of the greater sin of her lord. *Man*, the one *head* of the human family, fell in his entirety; for both his will and his rational and emotional nature disobeyed. Woman was the element of the persuasion to evil; the emotional and sensual element became too strong through her presentation and embodiment of it for the intellectual and regulative faculties, and she suffers a real and typical subordination. This may sound to our ears a far-fetched argument when used to discountenance female usurpation of intellectual supremacy. It was, however, a method current at the time to look for and find in the Scriptures the concrete expressions of almost all philosophical judgments. At the present day we could hardly find a more vivid illustration of the essential difference between the masculine and feminine nature. If there be this distinction between the sexes, that distinction still furnishes the basis of an argument and a reason for the advice here rendered. The catastrophe of Eden is the beacon for all generations when the sexes repeat the folly of Eve and Adam and exchange their distinctive position and functions. So also an echo of the Fall reverberates in every human heart when the passions rule the intellect and mind yields its sovereignty to the affections.

Verse 15.—*Nevertheless womankind shall be saved through the childbearing*, i.e., through the fulfilment of the promise made to her seed, which, while the curse fell upon her, wreathed an aureole of new and wondrous glory round her head. By this translation, the $\delta\epsilon$ has its true adversative power, the

“article” before the word “childbearing,” receives its appropriate force, and the preposition *διὰ* is not deprived of its genuine instrumental value. Ellicott here follows Hammond, and gives the true explanation, which is not even hinted at by the majority of German expositors. *Τεκνογονία* is not used elsewhere for the “incarnation,” and the word was not adopted in this sense by the later writers. Chrysostom, *in loco*, gives to it the sense of maternal functions and duties; but this translation would leave the emphatic article unaccounted for. There was *one* “childbearing,” one “giving of a son” to our race, which is the salvation of the world and which has reversed the curse of Eve’s deception and Adam’s fall. The concluding words of the verse shew the broad individualizing application of the great childbearing. *Each woman must abide in faith and love and sanctification, with holy self-control.* A grand description this of the true saint, of the perfect woman. It is not by the instrumentality of her maternal functions that she becomes perfect, but through the sublime fact to which those functions ever point; and also when, in any special case, faith, love, holiness, and self-mastery spring from heartfelt acquiescence in the glorious victory of God over the malice of the devil.

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