

The Signs of the Times

"Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

OAKLAND, CAL., FIFTH-DAY, DEC. 19, 1878.

JAMES WHITE,
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Wanted.

We want some copies of numbers 9 and 14, volume 4 (present volume), of the SIGNS. Will those having them to spare please send them to this office?

Change for District No. 2.

In the list of quarterly meetings that of district No. 2 is appointed at Fairview. It will be held at Lemoore. Let all interested notice this change.

Italy.

We this week publish another interesting letter from Dr. Ribton, of Italy, to Elder J. N. Andrews. This was accompanied with several letters from Africa. In the first number of the next volume we shall publish an Appeal from Mrs. E. G. White in behalf of missions. Our missionary work in Europe and Africa is increasing in interest as it enlarges in its operations. Let all pray, and work for the object of their prayers, that this message of warning and duty may soon reach the "many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" to whom it is destined to be preached.

New Year's.

HUMILIATION, FASTING, CONFESSION OF SINS,
AND PRAYER.

We, the committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, appoint January 1, 1879, as a day of humiliation, confession of sins, fasting, and prayer. We have abundant cause, as a people, to humble ourselves before God in view of his manifest forbearance, love, and great goodness toward us.

Notwithstanding our unfaithfulness, he has, for his truth's sake, prospered our institutions, and also our more general work in the advancement and growth of the cause in a good degree. While we have cause for devout gratitude that our Lord still loves us and sends from heaven warnings and rebukes, we see cause for confession of our sins before him, humiliation and prayer for pardon for the past, and grace to help in time to come. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isa. 59:1, 2. Seventh-day Adventists throughout the length and breadth of the land are requested to assemble at their usual places of worship January 1, 1879, at 10:30 A. M., for the special worship of God. At 1:30 P. M. of that day let there be a business meeting.

One of the duties of that meeting day will be the consideration of heavy debts upon the houses of worship at both Oakland, Cal., and Battle Creek, Mich., and the plans to lift them, set forth in the supplement which accompanies this week's issue of the SIGNS. May God look down upon our efforts to return to him, and may his Spirit impress all with a deep sense of their duty to act their part in lifting the debt from these two houses of worship, and thus "Hold the Fort." GEN. CONF. COM.

Woman's Place in the Gospel.

We find two questions upon our table which are so nearly related that we answer them together.

1. "Is there any evidence that women may not partake of the Lord's supper?"

We give this as we received it. We should more naturally inquire, Is there any evidence that women may partake of the Lord's supper?

There is no special or explicit statement to that effect. Nor is there any explicit statement that minors may partake of the Lord's supper. But there is evidence that it was the duty of the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and to teach them that believed the gospel to observe certain things that were commanded them. And there is direct evidence that whosoever believes in Christ, or is a Christian, may partake of the Lord's supper. The conclusion is, then, evident that women and minors may partake of the Lord's supper, unless it can be shown that

women and minors may not believe and obey the gospel. As no one would affirm this, the question is settled beyond dispute.

There is another method of arriving at the same conclusion, and one which involves important considerations. The ordinance of circumcision was given to the patriarchs and to Israel which, from its very nature, must be confined to male children. *By birth* the male children of Jewish parents were entitled to the privileges of this rite, which was the seal of the covenant. Others might obtain it by complying with certain conditions. But no others were entitled to it by their birth.

Circumcision has its antitype. It is now of the heart; it is the Spirit of God in the heart. "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." As their circumcision proved their relation to Abraham in that covenant, so does ours, the possession of the Spirit, prove our relation to Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."

The promise made to Abraham is yet waiting for fulfillment. Stephen proved that it remains to be fulfilled. Paul, both in Acts 27, and Heb. 6 and 11, showed that the promise made of God to the fathers was the foundation of his hope. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:29. Not by birth or national distinctions, not by a sign which the males only could receive, but *by faith*—by a rule where "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." Gal. 3:28. This proves that the privileges of one class are the privileges of each and every class, unless there are specific restrictions. But no such exist in regard to the Lord's supper. Hence, females, Gentiles, bondsmen, all who accept Christ and have his Spirit may alike partake of this privilege. And this leads to the next question, and to consider how far restrictions extend on another point.

2. "Is it right for women to speak in meeting?" Certain texts are quoted to prove the negative, and, apparently, they do prove it. Do they really?

A text of scripture may not be taken in all its possible meanings, but only in its actual meaning. This is obvious; for it is often possible to draw from a text that which may be shown to be foreign to the actual intention of the writer. We are not at liberty to draw a meaning from any text which makes it conflict with any other text, and especially of the same writer. And, secondly, we may not draw a meaning from a text which puts it in contradiction with a known fact.

In 1 Cor. 11:5, Paul says: "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head." Again in chapter 14:3 he says, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." But if women were never to "speak unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort," why did he say they should not speak thus or prophesy with uncovered heads? Why give a direction as to the manner in which they were to exhort, or comfort, or edify the brethren, if he meant to forbid it altogether? Granted that it is quite possible to draw such a meaning from his words in chapter 14, and to Timothy, can that be the actual meaning, seeing it is entirely inconsistent with his directions in the text noticed? It cannot be that he intended to utterly forbid in one text that which he allows in another text.

We notice, then the connection of the two texts which seem to involve a difficulty.

1 Cor. 14:29-35. "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. 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 any thing, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

It appears that something, or speaking of some kind, was herein permitted to the men which was not permitted to the women. But we have seen, and shall notice further, that they were allowed to pray and to prophesy, but under certain restrictions. We cannot allow that this text contradicts that. If this text is likewise restrictive—if it permits certain exercises or, perhaps, disputations, to the men which it prohibits to the women, then there is no conflict

between the two. Dr. Clarke gives us the following information: "It is evident from the context that the apostle refers here to asking questions, and what we call dictating, in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, altercation, attempt to refute, &c., in the synagogue, but this liberty was not allowed to any woman."

Such being the custom of the times, the propriety of the order will at once be seen, for it would be unseemly for a woman to engage in such a debate of words as was likely to occur. Paul was specially guarding against confusion. But this would not interfere with the permission to women to pray or to prophesy, if it were done to edification and comfort, and if the decorum which belongs to the place and occasion were preserved, and the women regarded that modest reserve which is such an adornment of the sex.

And this appears yet more evident from the explanatory declaration in his words to Timothy, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." 1 Tim. 2:12. The divine arrangement, even from the beginning, is this, that the man is the head of the woman. Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age. But the Scriptures always maintain this order in the family relation. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." Eph. 5:23. Man is entitled to certain privileges which are not given to woman; and he is subjected to some duties and burdens from which the woman is exempt. **A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder.** This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here prohibited.

Thus it appears from a harmony of Paul's words that his orders were restrictive, but not prohibitory. He certainly did not prohibit that which he plainly permitted.

More conclusive than this, if possible, is this, that to construe his language into a prohibition is to bring him in conflict with known and acknowledged facts. Woman's relation to the work of God has not materially changed throughout the dispensations. Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses, was a prophetess. In all instances recorded in the Old Testament it appears that God called women to this important office when the condition of the people was especially trying, or in time of great declension or disaster. We should naturally suppose that individuals of the stronger sex would uniformly be chosen at such a time, but God does not see as man sees. Those women whom the Lord chose to occupy this important place, have shown themselves peculiarly fitted to fill it, and often even in striking contrast with public men of their own time.

The children of Israel were "mightily oppressed;" "they chose new gods;" war was in their gates, though there was not a shield or spear seen among forty thousands in Israel. Judges 4:34; 5:7, 8. Then Deborah was raised up, who was not only a prophetess, but a judge in Israel. Barak, whose name was handed down by Paul (Heb. 11), among those of the faithful worthies, refused to go out to meet the hosts of Sisera unless Deborah went with him; so strong was his confidence in the Lord's appointment.

When the house of God was in desolation, and the law had ceased in Israel, Huldah was found a prophetess. King Josiah sought unto her for instruction, to learn how they might avert the wrath of God which was kindled against Israel.

At the time of the birth of our Saviour Anna was a prophetess, and she "spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel." Luke 2:36-38.

Did the change of dispensation work any change in the divine plan in respect to this gift? Not to its withdrawal; but it insured that the bestowal of the gift should be still more general. The promise was made thus:—"Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." "And on my servants and on my handmaidens will I pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."

The fulfillment was according to the promise. There were four prophetesses in one family—that of Philip. They had the gift, and they exercised it—they "did prophesy." Some would now put such a construction upon the words of Paul as to have closed the mouths of these handmaidens of the Lord, who were specially endowed by his Spirit. But Paul gave no sanction to such a construction; so far from forbidding the exercise of this gift by women, he pointed out how they should appear when

they prophesied. Paul was not so presumptuous as to interfere with the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, or to frustrate the gifts and callings of God in the church.

If this is not proof that Paul did not intend to forbid women taking part in public worship, then we must confess that we are slow to comprehend proof.

Neither do the words of Paul confine the labors of women to the act of prophesying alone. He refers to prayers, and also speaks of certain women who "labored in the Lord," an expression which could only refer to the work of the gospel. He also, in remarking on the work of the prophets, speaks of edification, exhortation, and comfort. This "labor in the Lord," with prayer, comprises all the duties of public worship. Not all the duties of *business meetings*, which were probably conducted by men, or all the duties of *ruling elders*, and *pastors*, compare 1 Tim. 5:17, with 2:12, but all that pertain to exercises purely religious. We sincerely believe that, according to the Scriptures, women, as a right may, and as a duty ought to, engage in these exercises.

"Preach the Word."

This was the injunction written by the apostle Paul, and he faithfully carried it out in his own ministry. Luke affirmed that he "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging [proving by citations, see Greenfield], that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Christ." Acts 17:2, 3. The sermon of Stephen, though cut short by the rage of his enemies, is another specimen of preaching the word of God.

We were led to remark not long since that the majority of sermons, so called, are not sermons at all. Many of them are well written and well read essays, on topics political, moral, general, or even religious; but they are not sermons; the writing and reading of them is not *preaching*. Strike out the texts and they would make good leading editorials for a high-toned secular newspaper. This is as highly as we could possibly recommend them. The following extract is from a notice of a discourse by Dr. Parker of London:—

"The sermon was one of a series of Sunday evening discourses, in which he was expounding the book of Nehemiah. The expository style being so much more commonly used in Great Britain than by American preachers, this seemed a peculiarly favorable time to study it at its best. Especially were we glad to hear him in it, as Dr. Parker himself spoke with much enthusiasm of the necessity of feeding the people with 'great masses of Scripture,' and with some contempt of the opposite method of taking a mere pinch of Scripture words with which to flavor a very copious dilution of human speculation. Solid gospel meat seemed to him much better than the poor water-gruel some ministers offer, on whose surface a text may float which has no vital connection with it."

That is an excellent picture of the modern essay style, which is called sermonizing. "A mere pinch of Scripture words with which to flavor a very copious dilution of human speculation." Dr. Chalmers, in his book entitled *The Ministry of the Gospel*, thus deals with the modern sermon:—

"It is not preaching the gospel to select a phrase of really no moral significance, or the relation of some incidental event, and make this the basis of what we call a sermon. For instance, suppose we take for our text Luke 24:13: 'And beheld two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs.'

"We might begin by a learned discussion on the length of a Jewish furlong; we might compare it with the Roman measures of distance, with the Persian parasang, with the furlong in use among us; and thus determine, with apparent accuracy in miles, rods, and yards, how far Emmaus was from Jerusalem. We might then inquire where this village stood, whether east, west, north, or south from Jerusalem, and inform our audience of all the places now existing which have been taken for this locality, with the reasons which have been adduced in favor of each. If, as might be the case, the preacher himself had visited Jerusalem, he might tell us of the labor he had spent in the personal investigation of this subject; how carefully he had paced the distance between Jerusalem and the various localities which claimed to be the village of Emmaus. He might describe the nature of the soil; the loveliness of a summer morning in Judea; the face of the country; the conversation of his Arab guides, and their incessant call at every turn of