

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS"WOMAN'S WORK IN THE
CHURCH."

By Mrs. George Bogg, Austin, Texas

Woman's sphere has for so long been restricted to the sheltered precincts of home, that some have grasped the mistaken idea that there only she should let her light shine, and leave the outside work and gatherings to the men; but it is evident that the Saviour did not have that thought in mind when He gave His first message of the new life of women to spread abroad. In the history of the early Christian Church, as we have it in the new testament, there is personal mention of about forty women who took active part, besides others whose names are not mentioned, as the woman at the well in Samaria; the penitent adorer in Simon's house; the waiting women on their way to Calvary; the praying women in the upper chamber, etc., and the kind remembrance and salutations sent to them by Paul in his letters show us how much their services were appreciated. When we remember what the Lord Jesus has done for woman, our hearts should burn with a desire to repay, for we certainly owe him a debt that cannot be calculated.

His birth marked a turning point in woman's history. Before that event, as in the heathen countries to this day, she was the victim of man's caprice, cruelty, lust, scorn and tyranny. Even the Hebrews who had been taught from the beginning to reverence woman, regarded her as man's handmaid, rather than his equal; in fact, a Jewish morning prayer prescribes that a man shall bless God for three things; namely: that he was not born a gentile, a slave, or a woman. When God sent forth His son to be born of woman, then was she raised to the position of equality she held in Paradise. Henceforth there was to be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus."

It has been so ever since; wherever Jesus Christ has been best known, woman has been most honored; we owe it all to the Son of Mary and our love for Him should inspire us to a life of useful and faithful service.

The earnest aspiration of each one of us should be "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits to me?"

This feeling of gratitude is sometimes unaccompanied by practical results through a sense of inability (real or presumed) to ascertain some available channel of doing good; and the believer is often too apt on the one hand to wait for opportunities, and on the other to entertain discouragement on the ground of imaginary powerlessness.

While it is true that we of ourselves can do nothing and that it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, it is also certain that He calls everyone of us, however feeble and humble to enter into the vineyard and take up work of some kind for the Master. And while special services are from time to time indicated to and laid upon particular individuals, there are some modes of usefulness that are always open to all.

Foremost among these is Intercessory Prayer. This is a duty and privilege ever practical to the poorest or most illiterate equally with the most gifted. We may have neither silver nor gold to offer, neither eloquence nor learning to make use of, but this is one service of the noblest and most blessed nature always within the reach of every Christian, old or young, rich or poor, weak

or strong. And how glorious a work it is. It is Christ's own work in Heaven. "He liveth to make intercession for us."

It was a characteristic work both of our Lord and of His apostles when on earth and it was placed first amongst the duties laid upon Timothy for his own pastoral inculcation and exercise. Paul wrote "I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, etc., for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

Visiting people in their homes and talking with them is another way in which we may work. A private intimate conversation may sometimes effect what public preaching has failed to do.

We are often much too backward and shy when work of this kind is required. It is true there is a certain shyness and reserve necessarily connected with all deep feeling, indeed we cannot think that good is done in any instance when we overstep the modesty of nature, but there is a cowardly avoidance of this duty that deserves to be condemned. A word of kindly interest, an offer of Christian sympathy, and an invitation to our church and homes will be only a small act, but may work wonders. All ranks need sympathy, and that the church may have full power, all ranks should furnish workers.

If every church member were a worker, the effect would be wonderful. There is true pleasure in working for Christ and profit besides. Would we not have thought it a great privilege to minister to the Son of Man had we lived in his day? And he has said "In as much as we did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, we did it unto me."

The responsibility of the church is to light the world. Our work as members is to instruct the ignorant, to warn the careless, to direct the anxious, to encourage the timid, to revive the faint, to offer consolation to the bereaved and to pray often to the good Father for the blessing and the power of His spirit upon His workers for it is His influence alone that can give efficacy to Christian effort.

This is the work that woman can do personally whenever she can find time or opportunity, but there are other ways by which she can be a great help to the church and pastor.

(A) By being a regular and earnest attendant at Church services. It is certainly an inspiration to a minister to stand in the pulpit and see before him the familiar faces of those whom he knows are his friends and helpers and are there to receive a benefit and not to criticize.

(B) By teaching in the Sabbath school. Every woman is not fitted for this work and many are not able to take it up, but it is a grand and important work for the Master.

(C) By prayer services. Even two or three gathered together in Christ's name have been promised a blessing and answer to prayers. Speaking from personal experience, I will say that the unity and love formed among those who meet together to pray is a proof of its efficacy.

(D) By social organizations. The life and influence of the church can be greatly advanced and the pastor's labor lightened by systematic work in drawing the people together and watching for strangers to bring them in.

(E) By Missionary Societies. Every woman should be interested in missions; our Saviour was a missionary who left His home on high and gave His life a ransom for many. He commanded that the Gospel be preached to all the world and, as His followers, we should be glad to help in the work. The study of it will greatly increase the interest, and prayers and gifts will be more freely and gladly offered.

With all these ways of service pointed out, none can fold her hands and say "There is nothing for me to do." The Master needs us all and in love we should yield ourselves to Him. He knows what each one can do and He expects our best—no more, no less. Let us pray, not that our work may be easy, but that we may have strength to do it and a willing mind—willing to be willing to win souls for Christ.

It is said that Napoleon, after one of his great victories, had medals made with an account of the battle on one side, and on the other the words "I was there." He gave one to each of his soldiers and, after he was dead, they would bring out their medals and show them to their friends. They were proud of them and of the fact that they had been there in the thickest of the fight.

There is a great warfare going on to-day between Christ and Satan, between light and darkness, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world: let us each one have a hand in it, so that after the last battle is fought and the last victory is won, we can meet in the home of glory and say to one another "I was there." Let us remember also that if we are not helping, we are hindering. The Saviour said "He that is not for Me is against Me, he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad." However unwilling anyone may be to help, there is surely one who desires to hinder, and if we must be on either side, let us prepare ourselves for work and get in line on the winning side. I was very much impressed by a short poem written by Ella Wheeler Wilcox in which she divides the people into those who lift and those who lean:

"Where'er you go you will find the world's masses
Are always divided in just these two classes:
And, oddly enough, you will find, too,
I ween,
There is only one lifter to twenty who lean.
In what class are you? Are you easing the load
Of over-taxed lifters, who toll down the road?
Or are you a leaner, who lets others bear
Your portion of labor and worry and care?"

"In what amusements may one indulge, and how far may one go in these pastimes?" are questions often asked by young people. Dr. Campbell Morgan has given a comprehensive and satisfactory answer in these words: "What form of amusement must you give up if you become a Christian? No amusement that is recreation. That must be your philosophy of amusement—Recreation. Anything that destroys you, spirit, mind or body, of course you must give up because Jesus is set upon making you perfect and beautiful, and he will not tolerate a retention of anything that stultifies you physically, or dulls you mentally, or blights you spiritually."