

1884

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

A good sister and a fine worker in the church writes us from Kansas as follows:

"I wish to ask you a few questions. In the HERALD of Oct. 12th, in your editorial speaking of the Sisters at Salem, you say: 'It gives us pleasure to note that the Sisters while at Salem also organized a State Christian Missionary Society. This shows that they also mean business in the missionary work.' Then in speaking of the editor of the *New Northwest* you say: 'The Bible teaches that the family has had a head from the creation of the first pair, and must continue to have one for all time; and that man was and is that head,' etc. Now if man is that head, what means this Constitution of the Woman's Christian Missionary Society and Executive Board published in the HERALD of Oct. 19th? I understand a constitution to mean a frame of government. Then who is the head of this government? Ans. Woman. What is to be governed? Ans. A Society. So you see we have *woman* for the head instead of *man*. You further say the Sisters "also organized a society" which implies that the brethren did the same thing. Now could not our Sisters work under the same Board with our brethren, and thus let man be the head in spreading the gospel as well as in politics? The Bible says that woman was created for a helpmeet for man. Does that mean that each shall work in a separate organization? When some of our brethren wish to prove that women have a right to speak in the public assembly, they quote the passage of Scripture, 'There is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus.' But in Societies, we have both male and female. And again, the society says that the president of the Board shall organize auxiliaries. Are we not baptized into the One Body? Are we not organized into congregations or churches? Have we not an executive board? If so, what need then have we for another? Is not God's organization as good as man's, or woman's either? Have not these congregations the power to raise money as well as a society? and will they not show by so doing that they mean business in the Lord's cause? Would it also not be better to give the honor to the church than to the society? Perhaps I have asked you enough questions for this time. You will please answer, for I am very anxious to learn concerning these things."

It is admitted that these questions carry with them considerable force and point, and yet we think they are based on a misconception of the relation the missionary societies sustain to the churches

and to one another. While there is nothing more clearly taught in the Scriptures than that God intended man to be the head of the family from the very beginning, yet it does not necessarily follow from this fact that woman may not have her own legitimate sphere in which she can consistently and Scripturally work for the Master. Because man is the head of the family, it does not follow that he may not properly turn over the management of the household duties to the good wife, or that he is to even meddle with these matters so long as she conducts the business allotted to her in a becoming manner. Yet in all of this she is simply the helpmeet of man.

In like manner may woman have her sphere of usefulness in the church of Christ. It is not proposed, as we understand it, that the Sisters, in organizing missionary societies, are actually setting up for themselves; that they propose to ordain and send out evangelists of their own sex to publicly preach the gospel and set the churches in order. Or that their societies are to be rivals of those conducted by the brethren, for if this were their object, then we should unhesitatingly oppose them as being contrary to the spirit of Apostolic Christianity. But on the other hand, their object is to *aid the brethren* in spreading the gospel, by using their means and influence in sending out suitable *men* to do the work. Thus you see man is really at the head of the missionary work after all. When we spoke approvingly of the Sisters' organization at Salem we did not mean to indorse everything they *might* do in the future. It was their disposition and determination to assist in the good work rather than the *manner* of doing it, that we approved and encouraged. Instead of regarding these societies as separate organizations and distinct from the churches, we should rather look on them as different spheres of usefulness in *the same organization*; namely, *the Church of Christ*.

It is true that we are baptized into the one body, and that this one body is organized into churches with their executive boards of officers; and so far as the government of the church is concerned, we need no others. It is also true that the societies propose to be governed by no other board. The conventions, instead of being

ecclesiastical bodies whose business it is to make laws for the government of the churches and the spread of the gospel, if they are what they profess to be, are simply composed of those brethren and sisters appointed by the churches under their board of officers and authorized to do the work of the churches in devising ways and means for doing missionary work. So it is the *church* after all that is doing the work, it is the *church* through her executive board that is raising the means, it is the *church* that is sending the gospel to the poor and needy and it is the *church* that receives the honor in the name of Christ. Now we are free to state that a convention

which is not thus subject to and governed by the wish and authority of the divinely organized churches and does not give the church the honor is not authorized by the word of God, and such conventions can not receive our support. Neither would we be understood as approving all the means used by some of our societies in the spread of the gospel. The end does not always justify the means, and there is room for much improvement. We are not of that class who see nothing to criticize and correct connected with our missionary work. When it comes to that, further progress is out of the question.

Suffice it to say that we are far from being fully satisfied with what we now have, and hope in the near future to give our readers the benefit of our thoughts more fully on this subject. In the meantime let us remember that there are two extremes on this question, and we should avoid swinging into either of them.

A subscriber writes us as follows:

"What does Paul mean where he says, 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend?'—1 Cor. 8:13."

This declaration is best understood in the light of the preceding portion of the chapter. The apostle is talking about the eating of meats offered to idols in the heathen temples. Some of the Gentile converts in that church who had been accustomed to idol worship, knowing that an idol was nothing, would go into the heathen temple, and eat meat not as a sacrifice to idols but as things indifferent within themselves. But by this liberty

of theirs, others who did not possess such knowledge might by their example, be induced to eat meat offered to idols and thus led away from Christianity into idolatry. So Paul, rather than cause his brother to stumble and fall by his example of liberty, would prefer to live on vegetables and eat no meat the rest of his days. Here is a lesson for all Christians. While there are some things in which we can engage which are harmless in themselves, yet there are other Christians who not possessing such knowledge may become offended and be led to commit sin. For *their* sakes therefore we should abstain from using our Christian liberty under such circumstances.

Another brother says:
"Please answer the following questions through the HERALD for my benefit: 1 Cor. 5: 5; also Heb. 12: 1. What is the sin which doth so easily beset us?" Is it common to all or is it not? In 1 Cor. 5: 5, give a full solution of 5th verse. Also whose duty is it to set the Lord's table? Is it our work or is it the deacons' and elders' duty to officiate at the table? Also, I claim that no evangelist has a right to officiate at the Lord's table when the bishops or elders are in the Lord's house; and no deacon has the right of an elder at the Lord's table. If wrong, will you please correct me?"

In Corinthians the apostle refers to the case of the incestuous man, and he exhorted the church that by the authority of the Lord Jesus, when they were assembled together to withdraw their fellowship from him. The object of this excommunication was not that the man might be lost, but that by thus delivering him over to Satan for a season his fleshly lusts might be subdued, and that he might be brought to repentance and restored to the church again that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. By reference to 2 Cor. 2: 6-10 it will be seen that the advice of the apostle had been followed, that the excommunication had its desired effect and that the brethren are there instructed to forgive him and receive him into their fellowship. So the object of withdrawing fellowship from any one is not to destroy him, but to bring him to repentance and save him.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us," is evidently the sin of unbelief, against which the writer warns his readers all through the epistle, and is applicable to all Christians.

As all are priests to God, we