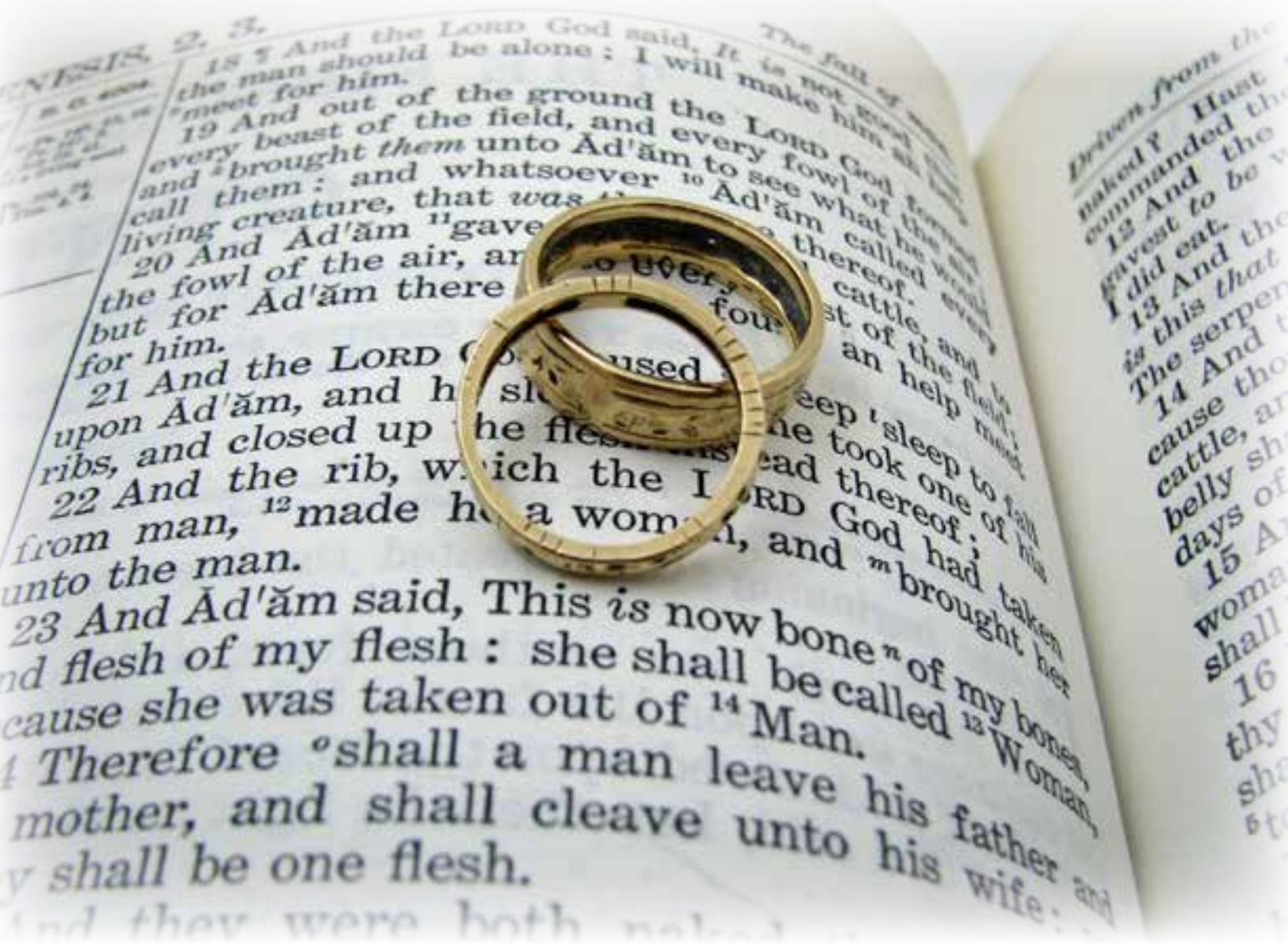


The CHRISTLIKE HUSBAND



WILLIAM GOUGE (1575-1653)

THE CHRISTLIKE HUSBAND

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William Gouge (1575-1653) was a Puritan minister who served for forty-five years at St. Ann Blackfriars in London and was a member of the Westminster Assembly. He and his wife Elizabeth had thirteen children.

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THE CHRISTLIKE HUSBAND

1. A Husband's Affectionate Authority over His Wife

Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

As the wife is to know *her* duty, so the husband much more *his*, because he is to be a guide and good example to his wife; he is to dwell with her “according to knowledge” (1Pe 3:7). The higher his position is, the more knowledge he ought to have how to walk worthy of it. Neglect of duty in him is more dishonorable to God because, by virtue of his position, he is “the image and glory of God” (1Co 11:7)—and more destructive not only to his wife, but also to the whole family, because of that power and authority he has, which he may abuse to support his wickedness, having in the house no higher authority to restrain his fury. Whereas the wife, though never so wicked, may by the power of her husband be kept under and restrained from outrage.

Therefore, to go on in order in laying down the husband's duties, we are to consider both the *duties* themselves and the *reasons* to enforce them.

In setting down the duties, we must note the *matter* in which they consist and the *manner* how they are to be performed. The apostle includes the whole matter of them all under *love*, which is the sum and head¹ of all. We will handle this first and then proceed to other particulars.

¹ **head** – chief; most excellent part; the idea is that love is the chief and greatest responsibility of a husband and that all other duties are subordinate to this one. This seems evident by Gouge's further statement, “...whereby it is evident that all other duties are included under it” in the following paragraph, and, “The reason to enforce all these points is taken from that place of honor and authority, where the husband is set above his wife, which is presented under the metaphor of a head (for the husband is the head of the wife),” in William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, Vol. 2., 98.

The Love He Owes Her

This head of all the rest—*love*—is plainly set down and alone mentioned in this² and in many other places of Scripture, whereby it is evident that all other duties are included under it.

To omit other places where this duty is urged, in this place *love* is expressed by name four times, beside that it is implied under many other terms and phrases (Eph 5:25, 28, 33).

Whoever therefore takes a wife must, in this respect that she is his wife, love her; as it is noted of Isaac (the best pattern of husbands noted in the Scripture), he “took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her” (Gen 24:67).

Many good reasons for this may be given.

1. Because no duty on the husband’s part can be rightly performed except it be seasoned with love. The apostle exhorts all Christians to do all things in love (1Co 16:14), much more ought husbands. Though in position they are above their wives, love may not be forgotten.

2. Because of all persons on earth a wife is the most proper object of love. Neither friend, nor child, nor parent ought so to be loved as a wife. She is termed, “the wife of thy bosom” (Deu 13:6), to show that she ought to be as his heart in his bosom.

3. Because his high position and power of authority may soon puff him up and make him abuse his wife, and trample her under his feet if an entire *love* of her is not planted in his heart. To keep him from abusing his authority, love is so much pressed upon him.

4. Because wives through the weakness of their sex (for they are the weaker vessels,³ 1Pe 3:7) are much prone to provoke their husbands. So, if love is not ruling in the hus-

² Ephesians 5:25.

³ **weaker vessels** – Peter does not specify how he understands the woman to be the “weaker vessel,” but the context would make it appropriate for him to have in mind any kind of weakness that husbands would need to be cautioned not to take advantage of. This would certainly include physical strength (most men, if they tried, could overpower their wives physically). But the context also shows that women are weaker in terms of authority in the marriage (verses 1, 5-6), and Peter therefore tells husbands that, instead of misusing their authority for selfish ends, they should use it to treat their wives with respect. Yet there may also be a third sense of weakness that would fit the context (because it is something husbands should not take advantage of), namely, a greater emotional sensitivity (perhaps hinted at in Peter’s admonition to godly wives, “as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (‘do not give way to fear,’ verse 6).” While this is something that is also a great strength, it nonetheless means that wives are often more likely to be hurt deeply by conflict within a marriage or by inconsiderate behavior. Knowing this, Christian husbands should not be ‘bitter (angry, resentful)’ (Col 3:19) or fill their marriage relationship with criticism and conflict, but should rather be positive and affirming, living together in an understanding way and bestowing honor on their wives...There is no derogatory [insulting] or misogynistic [woman-hating] nuance here, since the fact that the woman is called the “weaker vessel” (that is, the weaker of the two) implies that the man is also viewed as a “vessel.” The term recalls God’s creation of all people, both men and women, and is a reminder both of human frailty and of obligation to God our Creator. (Piper & Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 206)

band, there is likely to be but little peace between husband and wife. Love covers a multitude of imperfections.

5. Because as Christ by showing first His love stirs up the church to love Him, so a husband by loving his wife should stir her up to love him in return. Showing himself like the sun, which is the fountain of light, and from which the moon receives what light she has, so he should be the fountain of love to his wife.

Objection: Love was before laid down as a common duty pertaining both to husband and wife; how is it then here required as a particular duty of a husband?

Answer: In regard of the general extent of love, it is indeed a common duty belonging to the one as well as to the other; yes, belonging to all Christians, to all men, for it is the very nature of love, and a special property of it, to seek not her own things (1Co 13:5), but the good of others—which all are bound to do by virtue of the bond of nature. More than others, Christians are to love others by virtue of the bond of the spirit; among Christians, especially wives and husbands, by virtue of the matrimonial bond; of married couples, most of all husbands, by virtue of their position and responsibility. Their position is a position of *authority*, which without love will soon turn into *tyranny*. Their responsibility is, especially and above all, to seek the good of their wives. Because wives are the most important and greatest responsibility of husbands, so their most vigorous and greatest care must be for them. The parents and friends of wives, as they give over all their authority to their husbands, so they cast all care upon them; therefore, that husbands may take more care of their wives and better seek their good, they should in a special way love them. Husbands are most of all bound to love, and bound to love their wives most of all.

Thus this affection of *love* is a distinct duty in itself especially belonging to a husband and also a common condition that must be joined to every other duty of a husband, to season and sweeten them. His look, his speech, his conduct, and all his actions in which he has to do with his wife must be seasoned with love. Love must show itself in his commandments, in his reproofs, in his instructions, in his admonitions,⁴ in his authority, in his familiarity⁵—when they are alone together, when they are in company before others, in civil affairs, in religious matters, at all times, in all things. As salt must be first and last upon the table, and eaten with every bit of meat, so must love be first in a husband's heart and last out of it, and mixed with everything in which he has to do with his wife.

Hatred and lack of love

Hatred of heart is against love. This vice is very offensive and detestable in itself, and so much more when the wife is made the object of it. As love provokes a husband to do his wife what good he can, so hatred [provokes him] to do her what harm he can. Moses notes a man's hatred of his wife to be a cause of much harm (Deu 22:13-19). The nearer and dearer any persons be, the more violent will that hatred be that is fastened on them.

⁴ **admonitions** – cautionary advice or warnings.

⁵ **familiarity** – quality proper to a member of a family.

Hence was it that divorce was allowed to be made between a man and his wife, in case he hated her (Deu 24:3). Without question, this law was made for relief of the wife, lest the hatred that her husband conceived against her should cause her some harm, if he were forced to keep her as his wife. Christ seems to imply that in these words, “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives” (Mat 19:8). This therefore being so deadly a poison, let husbands watch out not to allow it to soak into them.

Neither is it sufficient for a husband not to hate his wife, for even the lack of love, though it be only the absence of good, is a great vice and contrary also to the duty of love. Where this lack of love is, no duty can be performed well—even as when the great wheel of a clock, the first mover of all the rest, is out of frame, no other wheel can be in good order.⁶ They who think of love as having little importance show that there is little or no love of God in them at all. For if the apostle’s deduction is good, taken from a man’s neighbor or brother whom he has seen, it will much more be good having relation to a wife; for how can he who does not love his wife (whom God has given to him as a token of His favor (Pro 18:22) and as a help meet⁷ for him, to be in his bosom (see Deu 13:6; 28:54; 2Sa 12:8) and ever in his sight, even to be no longer two, but one flesh), love God Whom he has not seen (1Jo 4:20)? If any man says he loves God and hates his wife, he is a liar. Let husbands therefore by loving their wives give evidence that they love God.

Wisely Maintaining His Authority

All the branches which grow out of this root of *love*, as they cover husbands’ duties, may be drawn to two heads:

1. A wise maintaining of his authority.
2. A right managing of the same.

That these two are branches of a husband’s love is evident by the place in which God has set him, which is a place of authority; for the best good that any can do, and so the best fruits of love that he can show forth to any are those that are done in his own proper position and by virtue of it. If then a husband relinquishes his authority, he takes away his ability to do that good and show those fruits of love, which otherwise he might. If he abuses his authority, he turns the edge and point of his sword in the wrong direction. Instead of holding it over his wife for her protection, he stabs her body to her destruction and so shows by it more hatred than love.

Now then, to handle these two separately and distinctly:

1. That a husband ought wisely to maintain his authority is implied under this apostolic precept: “Husbands, dwell with [your wives] according to knowledge” (1Pe 3:7), that is, as those who are well able to maintain the honor of that position in which God

⁶ **great wheel...order** – Before the invention of electronics, clocks consisted of wheels or gears driven by suspended weights.

⁷ **meet** – fit; appropriate.

has set you, not as dolts⁸ and fools without understanding. The same is also implied under the titles of honor that the Scripture attributes to husbands, as lord, master, head, guide, image and glory of God, etc., (see 1Pe 3:6; Eph 5:23; Pro 2:17; 1Co 11:7).

The honor and authority of God and of His Son Christ Jesus is maintained in and by the honor and authority of a husband,⁹ as the king's authority is maintained by the authority of his Privy Council¹⁰ and other magistrates¹¹ under him; yea, as a husband's authority is in the family maintained by the authority of his wife: for "he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man" (1Co 11:7).

The good of the wife herself is thus also much promoted, even as the good of the body is helped forward by the head's abiding in his position. Should the head be put under any of the parts of the body, the body and all the parts of it would certainly receive much damage by it: even so the wife and whole family would feel the damage of the husband's loss of his authority.

1. *Question:* Is it in the power of the husband to maintain his own authority?

Answer: Yes, in his more than in any others: for notice the counsel of the apostle to Timothy, though in another case, yet very pertinent¹² to this purpose, "Let no man despise thy youth" (1Ti 4:12).¹³ It was therefore in Timothy's power to maintain his honor and not to allow it to be despised; and so is it in a husband's power.

2. *Question:* How may a husband best maintain his authority?

Answer: The direction that the apostle gives to Timothy to maintain his authority, may first be applied for this purpose to a husband: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation,¹⁴ in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1Ti 4:12). It is as if he had said, If you walk before them in a manner worthy of your place and calling, and worthy of that honor and respect that is owed to it, showing forth the fruits of love, faith, and other similar graces, surely they will respect you; but if otherwise thou conduct thyself shamefully and not fitting for a minister, you give them good reason to despise you. Even thus may husbands best maintain their authority by being an example in love, seriousness, piety,¹⁵ honesty, etc. The fruits of these and other similar graces shown forth by husbands before their wives and family must work a reverent and dutiful respect in their wives and whole house towards them, for by this means they shall more clearly discern the image of God shining forth in their faces.¹⁶

⁸ **dolts** – intellectually dull or stupid persons.

⁹ See Titus 2:5 for the importance of the wife's behavior in this.

¹⁰ **Privy Council** – group of powerful political leaders appointed to advise and assist the king (or queen) of England.

¹¹ **magistrates** – civil authorities or judges who administer the law, especially dealing with minor offenses.

¹² **pertinent** – relevant or applicable to the matter being considered.

¹³ Timothy was a younger gospel minister whose authority might be despised by older people because of his age. This command implies Timothy held a position of responsibility.

¹⁴ **conversation** – manner of life; behavior.

¹⁵ **piety** – godliness.

¹⁶ Apparently a figurative reference to Moses (see Exo 34).

Objection: True goodness and grace itself is hated by wicked and ungodly wives: it was an act of piety that made Michal despise David.

Answer: 1. I may grant it to be so, yet this may be a good direction for such husbands as have not such wicked wives. 2. This does not always so happen, no, nor yet for the most part in those that are wicked; true virtue and integrity does often cause admiration in those who love it not. 3. Though some are of so crooked and perverse a disposition as to take occasion of contempt where none is given, yet shall that husband justify himself before God and man, that conducted himself worthy of his position.

Losing his authority

Contrary is their practice who—by their irreverence, partying, drunkenness, immorality, failure to take life seriously, wasting money, and other similar dishonorable conduct—make themselves contemptible, and so lose their authority. Though a wife should not take these occasions to despise her husband, yet is it a just judgment on him to be despised, seeing he makes himself contemptible.

Contrary also to the directions I just gave is the stern, rough, and cruel conduct of husbands, who by violence and tyranny go about to maintain their authority. Force may indeed cause fear, but slavish fear, such a fear as produces more hatred than love, causes more inward contempt than outward respect.

And contrary is their groveling disposition who, against their own judgment, yield to their wife's inclination in such things as are unlawful; they will lose their authority rather than make their wife unhappy. This is a fault plainly forbidden by the Law (Deu 13:6-8), and yet a fault in which not only wicked Ahab (1Ki 21), but also wise Solomon fell (1Ki 11:4). How heinous¹⁷ a fault and how grievous a fall this was in Solomon, the fearful result of it shows (1Ki 11:9ff)! Similar to him not in wisdom, but in its point of enormous folly, are those who upon their wife's instigation allow priests and Jesuits¹⁸ to lurk and celebrate masses in their houses and yield to be present at them themselves.

Similar to Ahab are such magistrates as suffer their wives to overstay¹⁹ them in course of justice, which it comes to pass that more petitions and suits are made to the wives of magistrates in the cases of justice than to the magistrates themselves, and the favor of their wives is more esteemed than their own—so as the power of governing, and the final decision in determining matters, is from their wives. They are but the mouths and instruments of their wives, in so much as among the common people the title of their places and offices is given to their wives.

Some husbands allow this by reason of their fearful and foolish disposition, lacking courage and wisdom to maintain the honor of their positions against the pride of their wives.

Others upon a subtle, covetous, wicked mind, that by the means of their wives there may be more freedom for receiving bribes. Among these I may reckon those who, against

¹⁷ **heinous** – hateful; highly wicked.

¹⁸ **Jesuits** – members of the Roman Catholic order, the Society of Jesus.

¹⁹ **overstay** – overrule.

their own mind, to satisfy their wives' minds, allow both their wives and children to follow the latest fashion, to dress themselves in a way inappropriate to their positions, to frequently be with foolish friends, and so on; and also those who upon their wives' insistent nagging are moved (as Samson was; see Jdg 16:15-17) to reveal such secrets as should not be known. Husbands may listen to their wives' suggesting good things, but they may not obey them in evil things—if they do, their fault is double: in doing evil and in losing their authority.

Let husbands therefore be very watchful against their wives' evil instigations.²⁰ Satan labored to overthrow Job by his wife (Job 2:9), and by this does he corrupt many in these days.

High Esteem of Her Position

As authority must be well maintained, so must it be well managed, for which purpose two things are necessary: a husband must tenderly respect his wife and he must give provident care²¹ for her.

A husband's tender respect of his wife is both inward and outward. *Inward* in regard of his opinion of her and affection to her, *outward* in regard of his conduct towards her.

For a husband's [inward] *opinion* of his wife, two things are to be weighed: her position and her person.

1. Her *position* is indeed a place of subordination and submission, yet the nearest to equal rank that may be—a place of shared rights in many respects, in which husband and wife are after a sort even associates and partners. From this then it follows that the husband must count his wife a coworker and companion (1Pe 3:7). This is one point of giving honor to the wife; and it is implied under that phrase by which the end of making a wife²² is noted (Gen 2:18), which in our English Bible is translated, “meet for him,” word for word, “as before him,”²³ that is, like himself, one in whom he might see himself, or even (to use our apostle's word) *himself* (Eph 5:28). These phrases imply a kind of fellowship, as also the many privileges that are common to both.

As a wife's acknowledgement of her husband's higher rank is the foundation of all her duties, so a husband's acknowledgement of that fellowship which is between him and his wife will make him conduct himself much more friendly, intimately, lovingly, and every way that suits a good husband towards her.

²⁰ **instigations** – acts of urging someone to do something, especially something bad.

²¹ **provident care** – meeting immediate needs and preparing for future needs.

²² **end of making a wife** – purpose of God in creating a wife for Adam (Gen 2:18-25).

²³ **as before him...like himself** – The sexes are complementary [*completing each other*]: the true partnership is expounded by the terms that are used (“a helper fit for him” 2:18, 20; literally “a help as opposite him,” i.e., “corresponding to him”), by the fruitless search elsewhere, as man discerns the natures (expressing them in the names, 20) of other creatures, and by the fact that Eve is of the very stuff of Adam and yet a wholly new being. (Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 70-71)

Fellowship between husband and wife despite her subordination

Objection: Fellowship between husband and wife cannot stand with a wife's *subordination* and *submission*.

Answer: They are of very small minds that cannot see how these may stand together. Is there not a fellowship between higher and lower magistrates in relation to their subjects? Scripture mentions a fellowship between Christ the head and other saints in relation to the glory of which all are made partakers, for it calls us "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17); and in relation to God's people, a fellowship between God and His ministers, for it calls them "labourers together with God" (1Co 3:9)—yet none can deny the saints and ministers to be subordinate and in submission to Christ and God. But to answer the objection directly:

1. There may be not only a fellowship, but also an equality in some things between those that in other things are one of them subordinates and subject, as between husband and wife in the power of one another's bodies—for in that the wife (as well as the husband) is both a servant and a master, a servant to yield her body, a master to have the power over his.

2. There may be fellowship in the very same things in which is subordination, for fellowship covers the thing itself, subordination to the measure and manner. In giving light the sun and moon have a fellowship, but in the measure and manner the moon is subordinate. The moon has less light than the sun, and that which it has it has from the sun. In governing, the king and other magistrates have a fellowship, but in the measure and manner of government they are subordinate to him. So is it between husband and wife. In many things in which there is a fellowship, the wife is nevertheless subordinate, so subordination may stand with fellowship.

3. There are no persons of different rank between which there is so near an equality as between husband and wife. If therefore there may be a fellowship between any that are in authority and subordinate to one another, then much more between husband and wife.

As the soul therefore rules over the body, by a mutual and loving consent and agreement so must a man over his wife.

Too low esteem of one's wife

Working against this is the idea of many who think there is no difference between a wife and servant except in intimacy, and that wives were made to be servants to their husbands because submission, fear, and obedience are required of them. From this it comes to pass that wives are often used little better than servants, an idea and practice that smells too much like paganism and drunken arrogance. Did God at first take the wife out of man's side that man should tread her under his feet, rather than set her at his side next to him above all children, servants, or any other in the family, however near or dear to him? None can be nearer than a wife, and none ought to be dearer.

High Esteem of Her Person

For the *person* of a wife, a husband ought to esteem that particular person to whom by God's providence he is joined in marriage to be the fittest and best for him. This is implied under that word "own," noted by the apostle where he says "husbands love your own wives" (Eph 5:25), and again presses it under a comparison of the body, "as your own bodies" (Eph 5:28).²⁴

Everyone thinks his own body best and fittest for him. A man might sometimes wish some defects or problems in his own body to be changed, and desire that his were like others, more slender, strong, and handsome than his own, yet he would not have his head to be upon that other man's body. A man that would love his wife ought to have the same opinion of her.

There is good reason for him to do so. The proverb is true, if it is rightly taken, "Marriages are first made in heaven," that is, God has a ruling hand in ordering them. Solomon implies this by that opposition²⁵ which he makes between wealth and a wife (Pro 19:14): *that* is from our fathers, *she* from the Lord. In this respect he says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD" (Pro 18:22). If therefore you are loved by God, and love Him, He will make your wife prove a good thing to you.

Objection: A wife may be a very immoral and wicked woman; how then can she be accounted the best wife?

Answer: First, it may be she was good enough when first she was brought to you, but you by your evil example or negligent leadership or harshness have made her as bad as she is. If it be so, then she is to be considered not as you have marred her, but as you did marry her. Secondly, though compared to other wives she is not in the best of condition, yet compared to you she may be the best in event,²⁶ if not for your peace and quiet, yet for testing your wisdom and patience; and she may be as a school of virtue to you. As a skillful pilot's competency is tested and known by stormy seas, so a man's wisdom by a troublesome wife. Yes, she may be given to you as a punishment of some former sins, as seeking after a beautiful, honorable, rich, proper wife, rather than a religious and honest one; or seeking her without any direction or help first sought from God; or otherwise than you have authorization from God, as by stealth, and without parents' consent; or some other sin in another kind—to bring you to repentance, or as a means to restrain and wean you from some future sins to which you are subject, and so prove a blessed *cross* to keep you from a fearful *curse*.

²⁴ Though it is not reflected in English translations, the same Greek word for "your own" (εαυτων) is used in Ephesians 5:25 and 28.

²⁵ **opposition** – contrast.

²⁶ **event** – outcome.

Husbands' preposterous opinion of their wives

A corrupt and perverse opinion, which many have of their own wives, thinking of them as the worst and least fit, is contrary to this,²⁷ even though they are those who every way—both in gifts and qualities of mind, and also in grace and attractiveness of body—deserve all good respect and esteem. Whereas others (which look with a single²⁸ eye) commend their good qualities, they misinterpret and are prejudiced in every way. If their wives are religious, they think them *hypocrites*; if serious, sober, and modest, *depressed*; if they go out for good reasons, *restless and running around*. This bad opinion of their wives is a cause that their hearts are completely removed from their own wives and set upon strange flesh,²⁹ by which the devil gains what he desires—that is, to separate those whom God has joined together, and to join those whom God has separated.

Wholehearted Affection for Her

A husband's *affection* to his wife must be answerable to his opinion of her. He ought therefore to delight in his wife wholeheartedly, that is, so to delight in her as wholly and only delighting in her. In this respect the prophet's wife is called the desire, or delight, or pleasure of his eyes (Eze 24:16), that in which he most of all delighted.

Such delight did Isaac take in his wife as it drove out a contrary strong feeling, namely the grief which he had for the death of his mother: for it is noted that “he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death” (Gen 24:67).

This kind of affection the wise man elegantly sets forth in these words, “Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe;³⁰...and be thou ravished always with her love” (Pro 5:18-19). Here notice both the metaphors³¹ and the hyperbole³² that are used to set forth a husband's delight in his wife. In the metaphors, again note both the creatures to which a wife is compared and the attributes given to them. The creatures are two, a hind and a roe, which are the females of a hart and a roe-buck.³³ Now it is noted of the hart and roe-buck that, of all other beasts, they are most enamored³⁴ (as I may speak) with their mates, and even crazy in their heat and desire after them.

These metaphors Solomon has used to set forth that sincere and eager, wholehearted and burning affection which a husband ought to have for his wife. Being taken in a good sense and rightly applied, so as they exceed not the bounds of Christian modesty and de-

²⁷ That is, contrary to the high estimation their husbands should have for them.

²⁸ **single** – whole, sound as opposed to bad (Mat 6:22-23). Those that are not blind see her qualities.

²⁹ **strange flesh** – biblical expression referring to unnatural sexual sin (see Jude 1:7, where these words refer to the sin of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities about them).

³⁰ **hind...roe** – possibly female deer and female wild goat.

³¹ **metaphors** – figures of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance.

³² **hyperbole** – figure of speech consisting of exaggeration for the purpose of making an impression.

³³ **hart and roe-buck** – possibly male deer and male wild goat.

³⁴ **enamored** – full of the passion of love.

gency, they are very fit and pertinent to the purpose. If we stretch them beyond modesty, we wrong the writer of them, or rather the Holy Spirit that directed him, and propose a harmful pattern to husbands.

The attributes given to the creatures much amplify the point; the former is termed a “loving hind,” the latter a “pleasant roe,” word for word a hind of loves, a roe of favor, that is, exceedingly loved and favored—for to set forth the extent of God’s love to His Son, Christ is called “the son of his love” (Col 1:13, *Greek*).

These comparisons applied to a wife vividly set forth that delight which a husband ought to take in her, and it is yet much further amplified by the hyperbole used in this phrase, “be thou ravished always with her love,” word for word, “err thou in her love,” by which no sinful error or stupidity is meant, but a lawful, eager affection. It implies two things especially.

First, to make a man overlook some such blemishes in his wife, as others would soon see and dislike, or else to count them no blemishes, delighting in her not a bit the less for them. For example, if a man has a wife not very beautiful or proper, but having some deformity in her body, some imperfection in her speech, sight, gesture, or any part of her body—yet so to treat her and delight in her, as if she were the most beautiful and in every way most perfect woman in the world.

Secondly, it implies to esteem her so highly, to feel such fervent affections, to regard her so tenderly, that others may think him even to dote³⁵ on her. A husband’s affection to his wife cannot be too great if it is kept within the bounds of honesty, sobriety, and propriety. The wife’s affection ought to be as great to her husband, yet because of the husband’s place of authority, he must especially take all occasions to show his inward affection. Read the Song of Songs, and in it you shall observe such affection manifested by Christ to His spouse,³⁶ as would make one think He did (with reverence in a holy manner to use the phrase) even err in His love and dote on her. This is a good pattern and example for husbands, for nothing is more lovely than a good wife.

The stoic disposition of some husbands to their wives

Against this is the disposition of such husbands who have no warmth or heart of affection in them, but, like Stoics,³⁷ delight no more in their own wives than in any other women, nor count them any dearer than others, a disposition in no way authorized by the Word. The faithful saints of God before mentioned, as also many others similar to them, were not Stoics without all affection. Nor did they think it a matter inappropriate for them to delight especially in their wives (witness Isaac’s playing with his wife in Genesis 26:8), for this is a privilege that belongs to the state of marriage.

³⁵ **dote** – bestow excessive love or fondness.

³⁶ **Christ to His spouse** – i.e., Christ to His Bride, the Church. There are two classic ways of interpreting the book of Song of Solomon: one is the *literal*, a man and his spouse in human love and affection; the other is *figurative*, the supernatural love of Christ for His Bride.

³⁷ **Stoics** – followers of a fatalistic Greek philosophy who sought to live by logic and put down strong emotions.

But so that I not be misunderstood here, let it be noted that the affection of which I speak is not a carnal, sensual, beastly affection, but such as is consistent with Christian seriousness and sobriety, relating to the soul of a man's wife as well as to her body, grounded both on the intimate relationship of marriage and also on the inward qualities of his wife.

I have written enough of a husband's inward respect of his wife; it follows to speak of his outward conduct towards her.

2. A Husband's Humble Gentleness to His Wife

Peter gives a general rule for a husband's outward conduct to his wife, which is that he dwell with her "according to knowledge" (1Pe 3:7), that is, as a man able to order his conduct wisely to his own honor and his wife's good, that so she may have good reason to bless God that ever she was joined to such a husband.

Out of this general principle these two branches sprout forth. First, that a husband give no just offense to his wife. Secondly, that he respond wisely to that offense which is given by her.

To avoid giving of offense, he must have respect to that which she does as duty to him and to that which he does as duty to her.

Regarding the former, two things are required: both that he kindly accept what she is willing and able to do, and that he wisely praise and reward what she does well.

Thus having presented this outline, I will distinctly handle the various points.

Thoughtful Acceptance of Her Goodness

The first particular in which a husband shows himself to be a man of knowledge in walking before his wife, is by *a kind and thoughtful acceptance of every good duty that his wife performs*. Abraham, to testify of his good acceptance of Sarah's work in nursing her child, made a great feast when the child was weaned (Gen 21:8), and Elkanah in a similar respect gave liberty to his wife to do what seemed her best (1Sa 1:23).

A great encouragement this must be to wives to be subject to their husbands in all things, when they observe no part of their submission to be carelessly neglected, but rather graciously accepted. It quickens the spirit of a wife to think that her concern and labors in pleasing her husband shall not be in vain.

A husband's despising and rejecting her goodness

Against this is the practice of those who, thinking all that a wife does to be just her duty, take little or no notice of it; or if they cannot help taking notice of it, regard it as of little importance and pass it over with scarcely a thought. This often makes a wife even regret the good she has done, as David regretted the service that he had done for Nabal

(1Sa 25:21). The truth is that wives ought to look to God for His acceptance rather than to their husbands, and though their husbands will take no notice or not regard what good thing they do, for conscience sake and for the Lord's sake to do their duty. But even considering our weakness and slowness to do every duty, it cannot be denied but that a husband's slight regarding of his wife's goodness is an influence to make her weary of it, and that he does as much as he can to make her regret it.

But what may we say of those who mock and reject their wives' attempts to do their duty, even like them the worse for being conscientious of it, and so (contrary to the rule of Christianity) overcome goodness with evil (Rom 12:21)? Surely they show a very diabolical spirit to be in them, and cannot but cause much grief and offense to their wives, and make that which they do to be very tiresome and tedious. Fathers should not provoke their children, much less husbands their wives (Eph 6:4).

A husband's courteous acceptance of her respectful conduct

To better understand this necessary point, I will somewhat more particularly and distinctly apply the same to the duties of a wife, which were drawn to two headings: respect and obedience.

For the first, if a wife shows her due respect of her husband by any reverent behavior, gesture, or speech, he ought to meet her (as we say) halfway, and manifest his gracious acceptance of it by some similar courteous behavior, gesture, and speech, being appropriate, not foolish.

Objection: Thus shall a husband lower himself, and disgrace his position.

Answer: The courtesy that I speak of as it comes from an authority, being a mere voluntary matter and a sign of kindness and favor, is not degrading himself, but honoring his subordinate—a great grace to her, and no disgrace to him. Abram was counted by the Hittites a prince of God,³⁸ yet in talking with them he bowed to them (Gen 23:6-7). It is noted as a commendable thing in Esau that—though at that time he was his brother's superior (at least he took himself so to be), yet observing how Jacob respected him, bowing seven times to the ground—he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck (Gen 33:3-4). Most relevant to the point is the example of King Ahasuerus, who beholding Esther's respectful standing before him, held out his scepter to her, which in a king is a great courtesy (Est 5:2).

But to put the matter beyond doubt, let the example of Christ noted in Solomon's Song be observed, and we shall find His courtesy in every way corresponding to the reverence of His spouse.

A husband's too great aloofness

Contrary is the aloof conduct of husbands to their wives, who overlook all respect showed by wives, treating their wives in this case no better than children or servants, or no better than kings do respect the honor shown them by their subjects. Often have I noted that there is a great difference between a wife and all other subordinates, and

³⁸ **prince of God** – mighty prince; Hebrew *elohim* can indicate “God” or “mighty.”

therefore every way she shows respect to her husband should be acknowledged all the more by him. We know that kings and queens will put out their hands to be kissed by their subjects when they kneel before them, which is a sign of courtesy. How much more ought husbands to show courtesy! They are unworthy to be respected by their wives who, too, are so lordly that they do not acknowledge them.

Ready Yielding to Her Humble Desires

Again, it being a sign of respect in a wife humbly to make known her desire to her husband, he ought to show so much courtesy as willingly to grant her desire. This courtesy Ahasuerus afforded to Esther (Est 5:3), David to Bathsheba (1Ki 1:28-30), Isaac to Rebekah (Gen 27:46-28:1), Abraham to Sarah (Gen 16:6), and many other husbands to their wives. Abraham showed such respect to his wife that, though the thing which she desired grieved him, he yielded to his wife (Gen 21:10-11).

Objection: God first commanded him so to do (Gen 21:12).

Answer: This adds the more force to the argument, showing that it is God's plain will, that a husband should show this kind of courtesy to his wife.³⁹ Much more ought a man to do his wife's request than any other's, whether friend, child, or parent. Much more free, eager, and cheerful should he be to show himself in granting his wife's request than any other's, assuming that her desire be of that which may lawfully be granted. To yield in things unlawful is to lose his authority.

Harsh reluctance

Against this is the harshness of their disposition who yield to their wives' request as a cow that yields her milk with difficulty, not without much trouble, by which the grace of all their yielding is taken away. There can be no courtesy in yielding when it is forced from them against their mind and will. Their wives must ask, and beg again and again, even be forced to use the mediation of others to persuade their husbands to yield to their requests before they will yield, if at all they yield. What is this but to proclaim to all the world that there is no affection in them to their wives? If a wife's breath is strange⁴⁰ to her husband, surely his heart is first strange to her, which is the ready way to make him set his heart on strange women.

Refraining to Demand All That He May

As a wife's respect, so also her obedience must be answered with her husband's courtesy. To testify of this, *a husband must be ready to accept that in which his wife shows herself willing to obey him*. He ought to be sparing in demanding too much of her. In

³⁹ Though the primary reason given in the passage for granting her request is not courtesy to Sarah but the calling of Abraham's seed in Isaac (see Gen 21:10-13).

⁴⁰ **breath is strange** – Gouge alludes to Job 19:17, where Job refers to his wife's alienation from him by saying, "My breath is strange to my wife." Gouge plays on this word to warn that if a man despises his wife's requests ("breath"), it shows that his heart is hostile to her, and he is on the path to adultery ("strange women," see Pro 5:30).

this case he ought so to frame his conduct towards her, that the obedience which she performs may rather come from her own voluntary disposition, from a free conscience toward God, even because God has placed her in a position of submission, and from a wife-like love, than from any demands on her husband's part, and as it were by force.

Husbands ought not to demand of their wives, whatever wives ought to yield to if it be exacted. They must observe what is lawful, necessary, convenient, helpful, and fit for their wives to do, and what they are most willing to do, before they are too determined to demand it. For example, 1. Though the wife ought to go with her husband and dwell where he thinks fitting, he should not (unless by virtue of some urgent calling) move her from place to place, and carry her from that place where she is well settled without her glad consent. Jacob consulted with his wives and tested their willingness, before he carried them from their father's house (Gen 31:1-16).

2. Though she should cheerfully show hospitality to whatever guests he brings into the house, he should not be painful and burdensome to her. The greatest care and labors for serving guests lay on the wife; she should therefore be treated tenderly here.

If he sees that she is conscientious and wise, well able to manage and order matters about the house yet hating to do anything without his consent, he ought to be ready and free in yielding his consent and satisfying her desire, as Elkanah (1Sa 1:23). If she is bashful and backward in asking consent, he ought voluntarily to offer it, and to give her a general consent to order and manage matters as in her wisdom she sees fitting, as Elkanah did, and the husband of that good housewife which Solomon describes (Pro 31:11).

A general consent is especially required for the ordering of household affairs, for it is a charge laid upon wives to "guide the house" (1Ti 5:14), by which it appears that the businesses of the house most properly belong to the wife. Husbands ought to refer matters to their ordering there, and not restrain them in every particular matter from doing anything without a special permission and direction. To present this in some particulars, it belongs particularly to a wife,

1. To order the decorating and organizing of the house (Pro 31:21-22),
2. To manage the ordinary provision of food for the family (Pro 31:15),
3. To rule and govern female servants (Gen 16:6),
4. To bring up children while they are young, and so on (1Ti 5:10; Ti 2:4).

These therefore ought he to refer to her discretion with a general consent (2Ki 4:19), with limitation only of two cautions.

1. That she have in some measure sufficient discretion, intelligence, and wisdom, and not be too ignorant, foolish, simple, lavish, etc.

2. That he have a general oversight over all, and so use his authority that he tolerates nothing that is unlawful or improper to be done by his wife about house, children, servants, or other things—for the general responsibility of all lies mainly upon him; he shall give an account to God for all things that are wrong in his house, and the blame of all will also before men lie upon him.

But those two cautions provided, he should together with his general consent put trust in his wife (Pro 31:11), as Potiphar did in Joseph (Gen 39:6), making here a difference between a wife and all others, whether adult children, friends, or servants whom he employs in his affairs. In every particular he may direct them for matter and manner, and take a strict account of them for expenses laid out, or other things done, because what they do is wholly and only for another. To his wife—who is a joint parent of his children and governor of his house, to whose good the husband’s wealth returns and thus does for herself that which she does for her husband—greater liberty and permission must be given.

Too much strictness

Against this is the rigor and austerity⁴¹ of many husbands who stand upon the uttermost step of their authority and yield no more to a wife than to any other subordinate. Such are they:

1. Who are never contented or satisfied with any duty the wife performs, but always demand more and more.

2. Who do not care how painful and burdensome they are to their wife—painful by bringing such guests into the house as they know cannot be welcome to her; burdensome by too frequent and untimely inviting of guests, or imposing other similar extraordinary businesses, over and above the ordinary affairs of the house. Too frequent imposing of such things cannot but cause much fatigue. Demanding things with poor timing, as when the wife is weak by sickness, child-bearing, nursing, or other similar means, and so not able to serve as well as otherwise she would, will certainly greatly disturb and offend her.

3. Who hold their wives under as if they were children or servants, restraining them from doing anything without their knowledge and particular, explicit consent.

4. Who are too busy in prying into every business of the house and will have their hand in them all. Besides that such husbands give no opportunity to their wives of giving proof of the understanding, intelligence, wisdom, care, and other gifts with which God has blessed them. Additionally, they take away that main end for which a wife was given to man, namely, to be a help (Gen 2:18). Such husbands cannot help but neglect other more weighty matters, which more properly belong to them. For observe it and you shall find that such husbands as are most busy about the private affairs of the house pertaining to their wives, are most negligent of such affairs as pertain to themselves. They think they walk in integrity, but yet are they neither just nor wise, for “the just man walketh in *his* integrity” (Pro 20:7), and “the wisdom of the prudent is to understand *his* way” (Pro 14:8).

That integrity belongs to his own particular position and his own way, but “every fool will be meddling” (Pro 20:3) with things not his responsibility.

5. Who are too suspicious of their wives; and, because of that, too strict in taking account of them. Paul calls suspicions⁴² evil (1Ti 6:4), and not without good reason; for

⁴¹ **austerity** – harshness; severity of discipline.

they are evil in their *nature* and evil in their *effects*, being the cause for much trouble, but in none so evil as in husbands over their wives. If a wife's fidelity (to whose good the welfare of the family, and increase of the family savings returns as well as to the husband's) be suspected without good reason, who shall be trusted? It is the overthrow of many families that servants are trusted and not wives.

This ends our discussion of a husband's kind acceptance of that which his wife is willing and able to do.

Encouraging Her in Good Things

The love that a husband owes to his wife further requires that he wisely *praise* and *reward* what she has well done. That which the apostle says of the magistrate's authority may appropriately be applied to a husband's in relation to his wife: "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same" (Rom 13:3). It is plainly noted in the description of a good husband, that he praises his wife (Pro 31:28-29); and in that he says, "Give her of the fruit of her hands" (Pro 31:31), it is implied also that he rewards her.

This is an undeniable evidence of his good acceptance of her duty and a further encouragement to stir her up to go on and continue in doing well. This is also an evidence of his joy and delight both in her person, and also in her doing well. If there is no delight in one's person, doing well will stir up envy rather than joy; and they that envy a man's doing well will never praise or reward him for it.

In a husband's praising of his wife, this caveat⁴³ must be put: that he so order his praise as it does not tend to flattery, or excessive or foolish affection, nor yet stirs up coveting or envy in others.

Discouraging her by ingratitude

Contrary [to his being encouraging] is an ungrateful if not envious disposition of such husbands, as passing by many good things ordinarily and usually every day done by their wives without any approval, praise, or reward. They are ready to criticize the least slip or neglect in them, and in such terms as if they never did anything well, so that their wives may well complain as it is in the proverb,

*Often did I well, and that hear I never;
Once did I ill, and that hear I ever.*

Yet such will be ready to praise other men's wives and criticize their own wives with the examples of those others, when their own do far excel them in all kinds of goodness. What does this show but that either they take no notice of their own wives' goodness, or else by reason of the commonness of it, regard it little? If their wives have not the more grace in them, this disposition is enough not only to discourage them from doing any good duty, but also to cause jealousy in them and to alienate their hearts from them.

⁴² **suspicious** – originally "surmizes"; groundless suspicions.

⁴³ **caveat** – *Latin*: "let him beware"; any warning or caution.

Gentleness in Performing His Duties

To this point we have covered the respect that a husband is to have of that duty which his wife performs to him. For avoiding just offense, a husband must further *give good attention to that which as duty he does to his wife*. As *kindly* he must accept duty at his wife's hands, so *gently* he must perform that duty which he owes to her.

This gentleness is a special fruit and evidence of love and a notable means to take away all offense that otherwise might be taken from many things that he does. Sugar and honey are not more pleasant to the tongue than gentleness to the heart. It causes such things as otherwise are annoying and painful to the soul to be well taken and applied—even as bitter pills dipped in sweet syrup or rolled up in the soft pulp of an apple are soon swallowed down and well digested. If a husband desires to be counted a servant of the Lord, he must learn this lesson; for “the servant of the Lord must...be gentle unto all men” (2Ti 2:24). If any other servant of the Lord, much more husbands; if to “all men,” most of all to their wives, and in many respects.

1. Because of the close union between husband and wife.
2. Because of the joint authority she has with him over others, that here he may be an example to her.
3. Because of her weakness; mirrors are tenderly handled, for a small knock quickly breaks them.

Bitterness

Against this is *bitterness*, a vice expressly forbidden, particularly to husbands, a vice that cannot be consistent with husband-like love. Upon this the apostle, commanding the one, forbids the other: “Love...and be not bitter” (Col 3:19). Nothing more turns the edge of his authority, perverts the use of his leadership, provokes the pride of his wife, makes his words and deeds less regarded, than *bitterness*. It is as gall and wormwood⁴⁴ mixed with sweet and wholesome foods, which causes that they cannot be well digested, but are spit out again with violence as soon as they are tasted. Men in authority are very prone to this, and therefore, O husbands, be so much more watchful against it. Love your wife and be not bitter to her.

Meekness in Instructing Her

The *gentleness* of a husband must be manifested in his speech and conduct. For as far as *reverence* extends itself in the duties of wives, *gentleness* must be extended in the duties of husbands. Whether a husband's speech be to his wife before her face, or behind her back, it must be sweetened with gentleness.

⁴⁴ **gall and wormwood** – very bitter substances.

Regarding his speech to her, the instructions that he gives her, the commandments that he lays upon her, the reproofs with which he checks her, [these] must all be mixed with *gentleness*.⁴⁵

To instruction the apostle plainly adds meekness. “Instruct,” says he, with meekness, “those that oppose themselves” to the truth (2Ti 2:25). If ministers must use meekness when they instruct their people, much more husbands when they instruct their wives. If meekness must not be laid aside in cases of opposition, then in no case, at no time, may it be ignored.

In this case to show meekness, let these rules be observed:

1. Consider the understanding and capacity of your wife, and suit your instructions to her ability. If she is of low capacity, give precept⁴⁶ upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little (Isa 28:10). A little at once often given, namely, every day something, will accumulate in time to a great measure, and so accumulate, that, together with knowledge of the thing taught, love of the person who teaches will increase.

2. Instruct her in private between yourself and her so that her ignorance may not be put on public display. Private actions passing between husband and wife are signs of much kindness and intimacy.

3. In the family, so instruct children and servants when she is present as she may learn knowledge by it. There can be no more meek and gentle manner of instructing than by one to instruct another.⁴⁷

4. Together with your precepts, mix sweet and forceful persuasions, which are testimonies of great love.

Against this is a harsh and rough manner of instructing, when husbands go about to thrust into their wives’ heads, as it were by violence, deep mysteries that they are not able to understand—and yet if they do not understand, they will be angry with them, and in anger speak with abusive language and proclaim their ignorance before children, servants, and strangers. This harshness is ordinarily so fruitless, and additionally so exasperates a woman’s spirit, as I think he would be better off to completely omit the duty than do it after such a manner.

The Matters for a Husband’s Commanding His Wife

The commandments that a husband gives to his wife, whether they be affirmative (telling her to do something) or negative (forbidding her to do this or that), must all be seasoned with gentleness. For which end respect must be had to the *matter* and *manner* of his commandments.

⁴⁵ We omit Gouge’s discussion of appropriate titles for a husband to give his wife (just before this section in the original), as being specific to his culture.

⁴⁶ **precept** – any commandment or order intended as an authoritative rule.

⁴⁷ **There can be...another** – i.e., the gentlest manner of instructing a particular person is to instruct him or her face to face.

Regarding the *matter* of the things that he commands his wife to do, they must be indeed lawful and honest, such as she is persuaded to be so, such as fit her position, and of significance and importance.

And on the contrary, the things that he forbids must be against God's Law, which he can evidently prove to her to be against God's Law, such as are inappropriate for her position, and will have some evil and harmful effect if they are done.

To command an unlawful thing, or forbid a thing which ought to be done, is to bring his own authority into opposition with God's—in which case he brings his wife into this dilemma: either to reject God's commandment or his. How then can she think that her husband loves her, when he brings her into such traps and distresses that she must fall into the gulf of God's displeasure or smash against the rock of her husband's offense? Gentleness is far from such commandments.

The same may be said of such things that seem to a wife's conscience to be sinful, if they be asked of her; or her binding duty, if they be forbidden, especially if she has any ground for her conscience out of God's Word. The conscience is subject to God alone; if it is forced, it would be a fearful horror and a very hell in that party whose conscience is forced. She that doubts is condemned if she does that about which she has doubts (Rom 14:23).

Objection: In doubtful matters, the commanding power of an authority is enough of a basis to satisfy the conscience of them that are under authority.

Answer: First, in things merely doubtful concerning which the party in submission has no warrant out of God's Word one way or other, it may be so. But when the conscience does not doubt and hang in suspense, but is grounded in God's Word and persuaded that that which is commanded is against God's Law or that which is forbidden is a binding duty, then to do this or to leave that undone is to the party so persuaded a sin. This is the doubting (of which the apostle speaks) that condemns a man. In this case, to urge a wife to do this or not to do that is to urge her to sin, which a gentle spirit and loving heart will not do.

Secondly, though the husband's command be enough of a reason to the wife, and if he absolutely presses her to this or that, she ought to yield; yet the love and gentleness required of a husband should make him so tender towards her as to let go of some of his rights—and when he sees her conscience troubled about his command, to relieve her conscience by refraining to press that which seems so burdensome to her. A husband may sin in pressing too much upon his wife some command that does not require her to sin.

Wise conduct when she is wrongly scrupulous

Objection: What if a husband upon his knowledge observes his wife to be wrongly scrupulous,⁴⁸ and to misinterpret and misapply the Word of God, which she makes the ground of her scruple?⁴⁹

⁴⁸ **wrongly scrupulous** – controlled by false fear or guilt from an uninformed conscience.

⁴⁹ **scruple** – regard to the morality of a course of action.

Answer: He must first labor to resolve her conscience by a plain discovery of her error, which is a true and great sign of love. If despite all that he can do in that way she cannot be brought to yield to that which he would have, then he must carefully observe these two things, whether her refusing to yield is obstinacy or weakness, and whether it be about a small or important matter.

By the reasons that she renders and her manner of pressing them, he may discern whether weakness or obstinacy makes her stand against him. If the reason from God's Word on which she rests is doubtful, and to one that has not a good sound judgment and a sharp discerning mind, it may appear to make something for her, it is to be presupposed that there is more weakness than stubbornness in her.

But if she can give no good reason, but only show any way that seems to incline her, holds her opinion with determination, and stiffly stands on her own resolution, though the emptiness of her arguments be plainly shown to her, so that she has nothing further to object, or if she render no reason at all but her own thought, opinion, and will, and yet refuses to yield, surely obstinacy possesses her heart. In case of obstinacy, it is very helpful that a husband insist upon his power to maintain his authority, and by the best wisdom he can (using only such means as are lawful) bring her to yield from her stubbornness to that which he requires, especially if the matter is important. Consider the case of a religious⁵⁰ man married to a popish⁵¹ wife, and she will be moved by no reason to refrain going to mass nor yield to go to the preaching of the gospel.

But if through weakness she cannot be persuaded of the lawfulness of what her husband requires, and the matter required is of no great consequence, nor the weakness of her conscience cause any great error, a husband ought so far to show his gentleness as to refrain to press her conscience.

Forbearing to press things inappropriate to her position

Things inappropriate to the position of a wife are dishonorable to her. For a husband to urge his wife by strict command to do them, implies more harshness than gentleness. Had the spirit of that stubborn king Ahasuerus been more gentle towards his wife, he would not have so far pressed his wife to so inappropriate a thing as he did, namely, to come before all his princes and people to show her beauty (Est 1:10-12). It is true indeed that she offended in refusing to yield, he absolutely requiring it, but that offense on her part does not justify his act and free him from all blame. It is noted that "he was merry with wine" when he gave that commandment, by which it is implied that his practice better fit a drunken than a sober man. Such is their practice who demand of their wives to do such businesses as are more appropriate for servants rather than wives, or immoral rather than honest women, as to go to taverns, ale-houses, play-houses, and such places where worthless companions are.

⁵⁰ **religious** – true Christian; person born of God's Holy Spirit.

⁵¹ **popish** – Roman Catholic.

Pressing his authority in important matters

If a man invokes his authority when talking to his wife about important and significant matters, then he helps her to feel how weighty such matters are. Thus a wife will either be brought to yield to that which is commanded, or to be convicted of guilt for not yielding. Thus, a wife may see that it is not his own will so much that makes him to use his authority in commanding, as the necessity of the thing itself—which returns good especially to her that does it. The performance of a duty is for the most part most profitable to the party that performs it, so that by this a husband shows love to his wife in pressing that which he requires.

That this sign of love may be more clearly seen, it is important that a husband add to his commandment just and weighty reasons that by them his wife may the better discern the fitness, lawfulness, helpfulness, and necessity of the things commanded. We know that all the things that God commands are weighty and necessary; His will alone (being the very rule and ground of all goodness) makes things absolutely necessary. Yet to His commandments He adds weighty reasons, showing on the one side the benefit and blessedness that will come to those who obey His commandments; and on the other side, the trouble and misery that will fall on their heads who refuse to obey. By this, He shows the great and loving concern that He has for us and the earnest desire He has for our good. Thus may a husband even in his commandments show much love and kindness.

Too great pride in commanding

Against this is the rough pride of husbands when they will have their own will done, and it does not matter whether the thing commanded be lawful or against God's Law, whether their wives' consciences can yield to it or not, whether it stands with the honor of their positions or not, and whether it be important or insignificant; it is their will that it should be done, and done it shall be—there is all the reason they will give. Some think it a glory to command what they like and think that there is no proof of their authority and of their wives' submission, but in such things as they command upon their own will without any further ground or reason. If such husbands meet with confrontations, if though they command much, they find not answerable performance, they may thank themselves⁵² that they are on the fast track to have their authority despised and even trodden under foot.

The Manner of a Husband's Commanding His Wife

Husbands must consider the *manner* of using their authority in commanding as well as to the *matter*.

Rare and gentle using of his commanding power

Regarding the manner, his commandments must be rare, not too frequent, and by way of making an appeal, not too absolute.

⁵² **thank themselves** – have themselves to blame.

Authority is like a sword, which with too much use will be blunted, and so fail to do the service that otherwise it might when there is most need. A wise, sober, peaceable man may always have his sword in readiness, very bright, keen, and sharp; but he will not be very ready to pull it out of his scabbard. He rather keeps it for a time of need, when it would give him the best use. Such husbands therefore who are too frequent in their commands show themselves not sober, nor wise, nor lovers of peace.

As the use of a husband's authority in commanding must be rare, so when there is occasion to use it, it must be tempered⁵³ with such gentleness and moderation, as a husband (according to Paul's example) though he has power to command that which is proper, yet for love's sake must rather appeal for it (Phm 9). Note how gently Abram frames his speech to his wife, "Say, I pray thee," says he, "thou art my sister" (Gen 12:13). Though the thing he required stinks of too much weakness, yet his manner of requiring it fit a kind husband.

Insolence⁵⁴ and absolute demands

Against this is the insolence of many who cannot speak to their wives but by commands. Their authority is like a swaggerer's⁵⁵ sword, which cannot long rest in the sheath, but is drawn forth for every little reason. This frequent use of commands makes their commandments regarded as nothing. The same may be said of those who are too absolute in commanding. There must be no saying of "no" to that which they say. Upon command they will have their will done, and no other way. No persuasion, no appeal shall be used. They will rather have their will done not at all than not upon absolute command. They will not allow others, in case of any refusal, to appeal or persuade, but will try what they can do by authority absolutely. Thus, as by trying to bend steel as far it will go, it often breaks; so by putting their authority to the uttermost trial, they often lose all their authority—in which case, "The mends," as we speak, "is in their own hands."⁵⁶

3. A Husband's Patient Correcting of His Wife

The authority and responsibility that God has given to a husband over his wife require that, when good and right reason presents itself, he should reprove her.

⁵³ **tempered** – moderated; made to fit the situation.

⁵⁴ **insolence** – rude and disrespectful behavior.

⁵⁵ **swaggerer's** – arrogant person's.

⁵⁶ **The mends...is in their own hands** – possibly, it is their fault, so let them fix the problem themselves.

Wise Reproof When Needful

A wise reproof is a special means to draw her from those sins in which otherwise she might live and lie, yes, and die also—and so live, lie, and die under God’s wrath. To free a wife out of this misery and wretchedness is as great a sign of love, as to pull her out of the water when she is in danger of drowning or out of the fire when she is in danger of burning. Solomon thus calls reproofs, a “reproof of life” (Pro 15:31), and expressly notes reproofs to be the way of life: a means to create and preserve spiritual life, and to bring one to eternal life, and so to escape death and damnation (Pro 6:23-25). In these respects rebukes are called a precious balm or excellent oil, which may *heal* a wound, but *make* none; “which shall not break my head,” as the psalmist speaks (Psa 141:5). Upon this ground, no doubt, it is noted of many good husbands who were undeniably loving, kind, meek, and gentle husbands, that they reproved their wives, as Jacob (Gen 30:2), Job (Job 2:10), David (2Sa 6:21-22), and others.

Neglecting reproof

Against this is a groveling⁵⁷ and fearful mind of many husbands who hate to offend and (as they think) to provoke their wives; and for this reason choose to let them continue in sin rather than tell them of it. They both dishonor their position and the image of God, which by virtue of their position they carry, and also in effect and in reality hate their wives. This the Law implies, where it says, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him” (Lev 19:17).

The Matter of Reproof Must Be Just and Important

That a husband may clearly show that his reproving his wife is indeed a fruit of his love, he must have a special care to sweeten it, especially with gentleness, for it is the bitterest pill that by a husband can be given to a wife. It is a verbal correction, and in that respect a middle means (as I may so speak) between admonition and correction, partaking somewhat of both. It goes no further than words, and so is an admonition. The words of a reproof are sharp, and so it is a correction. Though it is but a gentle correction, yet it is a sharp admonition, and all the correction that a husband by himself can give his wife, for we shall later show that he may not go on to hitting or striking her.

To sweeten reproof with gentleness, consideration must be given (as before was noted of commanding) both to the matter, and also to the manner of it. The *matter* of reproof must be *just*, and *important*.

Justice requires that it be a truth, and a known truth, even a thing of which he is sure, for which he reproves his wife. Christ, in giving direction for reproving correctly, lays down this principle, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault” (Mat 18:15). A trespass therefore must go before reproof. Where no trespass is, there reproof is unjust.

⁵⁷ **groveling** – fawning; flattering.

Again, the apostle advises that an accusation should not be received “but before two or three witnesses” (1Ti 5:19). By this he implies that a groundless report must not be received, but where blame is laid, there must be two or three witnesses to confirm it, so as he that rebukes may have good and sure ground for that which he does. Indeed, that advice was given in particular about an elder, but from the less to the greater it will follow to be a good advice concerning wives, for no kind of person must be more wary in laying blame and reproof upon another than a husband on his wife.

Fairness further requires that the matter for which a husband reproves his wife be *important*, namely for some fault that is dangerous to her soul, hurtful to their estate, contagious by reason of bad example to children and others in the family, but most of all a sin against God that provokes His wrath and pulls down His heavy curse upon him, her, and the whole family.

When that for which a wife is reproved is a truth, a known truth, and an important truth, the husband in performing this duty justifies his deed, shows that there was need of it, and so gives evidence of his love, makes his reproof to pierce the more deeply and so makes her more ashamed of her fault. From this it will follow that either she will fix her fault or at least will have her mouth stopped so that she shall have nothing to make excuses. The reproof of the three saints before mentioned—Jacob (Gen 30:2), Job (Job 2:10), and David (2Sa 6:21-22)—match these points of justice and wisdom, and the effects of it match those that we have noted in this reason, as the silence of the three wives implies, for none of them replied again.⁵⁸

Undue reproof

Against justice and equity are naïve gullibility and undue suspicion. Gullibility is when belief is given to every groundless report, and as a result blame is laid upon the wife before any fair proof be made of that for which she is blamed. By this it often comes to pass that she is wrongfully and unjustly blamed. If she is, what good fruit can proceed from such reproofs? What evil fruits are likely to proceed from this, such as secret unhappiness (if not malice and hatred) and open fights and shouting matches?

The same may be said of causeless suspicion, which is the mother of jealousy and the very bane⁵⁹ of marriage, from which the devil takes great advantage against them both, seeking by it to untie that knot that God has so firmly knit between them. Suspicion to the mind is as colored glasses to the eye, which represents things to the sight not as they are in their own true color, but as the color of the glasses is. Suspicion will make a man pervert everything that his wife does and blame her many times for praiseworthy things. In this case, what can be thought, but that a husband seeks advantage against his wife rather than any good to her?

If to those two vices (gullibility and suspicion) he adds rashness and haste in reproofing, and makes every small and insignificant matter that any way he dislikes matter of reproof, does he not proclaim to all that shall know it that he loves chiding more than he

⁵⁸ At least, not in the biblical record.

⁵⁹ **bane** – cause of destruction or ruin; deadly poison.

loves his wife? Yes, is not this the ready way to make all his reproof (if not scorned) regarded as nothing? What then will be the profit of them?

Whether a husband may reprove his wife for such things he is guilty of

To the matter of reproof some add that a husband should not reprove his wife for a fault of which he himself is guilty, but I doubt this direction. I do not deny that he ought to have a special care that he is not guilty of that crime for which he corrects his wife; otherwise, first he blunts the edge of his reproof, so it cannot pierce into her heart as easily. Secondly, he causes it to rebound back again upon himself with these reproaches, “Physician, heal thyself” (Luk 4:23); “Hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye” (Mat 7:5); “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” (Rom 2:21). Thirdly, he is a heavy witness against himself, for “wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself” (Rom 2:1).

But to deduce by this that because he is guilty of such vices as are in his wife [that] he should not reprove her though she be worthy to be reprovèd is hardly sound and good theology. Thus he makes himself guilty of a double fault: *one* of committing the sin himself, the *other* of allowing his wife to lie there; whereas if he reprovèd his wife, he might by it reclaim both her and himself. I do not doubt that his reprovèd of his wife would strike deeper into his own conscience than if a third should reprove them both. How Judah and David were stricken to the heart after they had given sentence against such crimes as they themselves were guilty of (Gen 38:26; 2Sa 12:13)! It is good advice that no man be guilty of that which he reprovèd in his wife, but it is no good rule to say that no man ought to reprove his wife of that of which he is guilty.

The Manner of Reproof Must Be Rare and Meek

Similar directions to those which were given for the manner of commanding must be observed in the *manner* of reprovèd. Reproofs therefore must be rare and meek.

When reproofs are seldom used except for urgent and necessary reasons, it first shows that a husband takes no delight in rebuking his wife, but is even forced to. Secondly, it makes his wife regard it much more. Thirdly, it is likely to work a more perfect cure, for seldom and rare reproofs commonly pierce most deeply.

Continual scolding and finding fault with a wife for everything wrong are against this. If not only the wife herself, but a child, or servant, or any else in the house do wrong, the wife shall be blamed for it. This is too common a fault in husbands, by which they much provoke their wives and many times make them regard a reproof no more than any other word. For as birds that always abide in bell towers where there is much ringing are not a bit frightened with their loud sound, so wives are not moved at all who have their ears from time to time⁶⁰ filled with their husband’s rebuke.

That a reproof must be given in meekness is clear by the apostle’s general precept of restoring one “in the spirit of meekness” (Gal 6:1), for a right manner of reprovèd is here particularly intended. Now, of all with whom we have to do, there is no fitter object

⁶⁰ **from time to time** – constantly.

for meekness than a wife, who in a more particular manner than any other is your own flesh. Meekness covers both privacy of place and softness of words.

When a husband is alone with his wife is the fittest season for reproof. Thus will reproof be answerable to Christ's direction: "Tell him his fault between thee and him alone" (Mat 18:15), says Christ of a brother, but no brother must be more tenderly dealt with than a wife. Thus will it also soak better into her soul, when no idea of dishonor and embarrassment shall rise up to hinder the work of it—which will be ready to rise when a reproof is given in public before others. Thus likewise will reasons be taken away from children and servants for despising her, which otherwise they would quickly take, if she should be rebuked before them, gathering from this that she is kept under as much as they. Now because she is a joint governor of them with him, he ought by all means to maintain her reputation before them.

Question: What if she does not regard a rebuke in secret?

Answer: He may follow Christ's direction (Mat 18:16): take one or two more, namely wise, sober, faithful friends, if it may be, of her family, as her parents (if she have any living) or those who are in course of nature next to parents (if they are not partial on her side) and before them rebuke her, but by no means before any of the household under her government.

Question: What if her sin is public, such as may be a bad example to them of the house, being committed in their sight or brought some other way to their knowledge?

Answer: Wisely he must so show his dislike of her sin that he no way harms her honor. He may therefore declare that such a thing was not well done, and warn his household against committing the same, even strongly threaten them that if any of them do the same they shall dearly regret it. If those who are under correction offend there, the more surely and severely correct them, even because they have taken example. Thus shall he testify a great good respect of his wife, and also a thorough dislike and hatred of her sin.

"A soft tongue," as Solomon notes, "breaketh the bone," that is, softens a hard heart, and beats down a stubborn pride (Pro 25:15). How will it then work upon a soft heart and gentle disposition? If therefore a husband aims to do good by reproofing his wife, his reproof must be so ordered that it may seem to be rather a gentle admonition than a sharp rebuke. He may and ought plainly to declare her fault to her, but in gentle and meek terms, without insulting, contemptuous, and shameful words.

Question: What if her fault be a heinous, scandalous sin?

Answer: In an extraordinary case, some sharpness may be used, as the reproofs of Jacob (Gen 30:2), Job (Job 2:10), and David (2Sa 6:21-22) show; for they were all sharp, but this sharpness must not be made bitter by any evil language. A woman's wickedness should not move a husband to be too quick to speak and furious, but rather to be the more watchful over himself that he contain himself within the bounds of discretion and moderation. For this end, it is proper that husbands lay it down for a rule never to rebuke their wives when they are in a rage. Strong emotions raise a dark mist before the eyes of reason, which, while it remains, keeps reason from giving any good direction.

Rage is as a fire, and it so inflames a man and makes him feverish that in his disorder he can keep to no standards.

Though a man be not able to rule himself when rage is stirred up, yet, if beforehand while his eye is single and his whole body light (Mat 6:22), while he is in tune (as we speak) and in a good frame of mind, he firmly resolves with himself not to do such or such a thing in his rage, that resolution will be a special means to make him refrain from doing that in passion—which if he should do, he could not in passion well order and moderate. If once he begin to do a thing in rage, the least provocation that can be will be as bellows⁶¹ to blow up that fire into a flame.

Regarding the violence of rage (in which women by reason of the weakness of their judgment are for the most part most violent), it is also the part of a wise man to refrain from this duty of reproving his wife even when she is in a rage. As it is necessary that he should be well composed to give a reproof, so as necessary it is that she should be well composed to take a rebuke. Rage both fills and corrupts one's heart. The heart then, being full of rage, what room is left for good advice? Will a man pour wine into a vessel full of water, or wait till all the water is drained out? The heart also being so corrupted that it is characterized by nothing but rage, what good can then good advice do?

It is therefore a special point of wisdom and shows a good respect that a man bears to his wife, yes, it shows much meekness and moderation for a husband, well to weigh both his own and his wife's temper when he reproves her and to refrain doing it while either he or she is in a rage.

Indiscreet reproof

Against this is the indiscretion of husbands who regard not place, nor persons, nor time, nor temper of themselves or their wives, nor any other circumstance in reproving, but like Saul—who at a table where a great feast was, in presence of his nobles and captains, when he was enraged with anger—with most poisonous and bitter speeches not only rebuked but also shamed his son, and that with such words as he spared not his own wife; for in his rage he called his son, “son of the perverse rebellious woman” (1Sa 20:30). Like this foolish and furious Saul, I say, they take the most open place of the family before children, servants, and whole house, to reprove their wives, and with such bitter and disgraceful terms as either they provoke their wives to answer again for maintaining (as they think) their own honor and reputation, as Jonathan was provoked to answer his father again (1Sa 20:32), or else give them of the household that see her thus trampled underfoot, occasion to set their feet also upon her.

Most husbands are eager enough to reprove, but few do it in meekness and moderation. They cannot do it but in company nor without bitter words. Many in rebuking their wives, do not restrain themselves from using all the evil terms that they can think of, even such as tend not only to their wife's dishonor, but also to their own and their children's infamy. The reason is because they never rebuke but when they are in rage, and so hardly know what they do, by which also they stir up rage in their wives, and yet for all

⁶¹ **bellows** – flexible bag or device used to pump air into a fire to make it burn hotter.

that refrain not a bit more, but rather grow more violent—as when the heat of two fires meet together, the flame must be the greater. This being the preposterous practice of many husbands, is it any wonder that ordinarily so little good and so much hurt is done by reproving? No, would it not be a wonder if any good and no hurt should be done by it? This therefore, though it is a duty, is a duty to be used rarely and with great moderation.

To this point we discussed a husband’s gentleness in his speeches to his wife.

4. A Husband’s Kind Conduct toward His Wife

A husband’s conduct toward his wife must match his speech, or else all the gentleness of it will seem just an empty compliment.

A man’s conduct includes under it his facial expression, gestures, and actions—in all of which must gentleness have its place.

Friendly Expressions toward Her

Affectionate facial expressions

His facial expression in his wife’s presence and towards his wife must be composed to a friendly cheerfulness. His authority over her, and rank above her, may not make him forget the intimate relationship and union between them.

Under the facial expression I include head, brow, eyes, lips, and such other parts that are, depending upon how they are framed, signs of friendship or unhappiness. Now among and above other parts of the body, the outward composition of facial expression does soonest and best declare the inward disposition of the heart. By Esau’s pleasant facial expression, Jacob perceived that he was pacified in his heart towards him and as a result said, “I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God,” that is, a friendly, gracious face (Gen 33:10). On this ground, David desired God to “lift up the light of thy countenance⁶² upon us” that by it he might know the grace and love of God towards him (Psa 4:6). On the other side—by a frowning and lowering face, by hanging down the head, putting out the lips, and so on—anger, malice, grief, with other similar affections of heart are manifested. Consider how by Cain’s casting down of his countenance God discerned anger and envy to be in his heart (Gen 4:6), or by Laban’s countenance Jacob observed that his affection was turned from him (Gen 31:2). A wife then beholding gentleness and amiableness in her husband’s face, beholds it as the face of God, and as in a looking glass beholds the kindness and love of his heart, and so has her heart more firmly knit to him and is moved to respect him more.

⁶² **countenance** – face.

Too great austerity

These attitudes are contrary to friendliness: an arrogant, proud facial expression, as of an emperor over his servants; a grim, stern facial expression, as of a judge over poor prisoners; a drooping, frowning facial expression, as of an unhappy lender over a desperate debtor; a fierce, fiery facial expression, as of an angry king over a subject that has displeased him.

These and such similar countenances manifest a proud, stubborn, furious, unhappy disposition of heart, so they cannot but give great unhappiness to a wife, and even much frighten her, being but a weaker vessel, and alienate her heart and affection from him.

Affectionate gestures

A husband's gesture ought to be so affectionate and friendly towards his wife that others may discern him to be her husband, and his wife may be stirred up to be affectionate with him.

They who are eager to show themselves kind and gentle husbands are prone to exceed and so to fall into an extreme on the right hand, for some are never content unless they have their wives in their laps, ever snuggling, kissing, and playing with them, regardless of who is around them. Thus, they show more thoughtlessness, foolishness, and overheated affection than true kindness and love, which forgets not a husband-like seriousness, sobriety, modesty, and decency.

Some allege Isaac's "sporting" with Rebekah (Gen 26:8) [in order] to justify their sensuality. But they forget that what Isaac did was when he and his wife were alone: he was seen through a window. Much greater liberty is granted to husband and wife when they are alone than in company. Besides, there are many other ways to show kindness and affection than by foolishness and lack of self-control.

Coldness

Against affection is coldness, when a husband so carries himself towards his wife as if she were a stranger to him. If he comes in company where his wife is, of all other women he will not turn to her nor take notice of her. This fault is so much the greater if such a man freely shows friendliness to others and is accustomed to be glad and affectionate with other women. Though his gladness and affection to them are not unfitting a Christian, yet his conduct being of another temper⁶³ towards his wife, it may be a means to create jealousy in her. Many think outward, kind gestures towards a wife to be foolishness, but if they knew what a means it is to stir up, increase, and preserve love in a wife's heart to her husband, they would think differently.

Giving Gifts

Actions are the most real demonstrations of true kindness in which a husband must not fail, as he would have his kind speech, facial expression, and gesture to be received in the best way. Kindness and gentleness in action consists in giving gifts (as we speak) to

⁶³ **temper** – character.

his wife. This is plainly noted in Elkanah, who every year gave portions to his wives (1Sa 1:4-5). Thus a husband like him testifies his love to his wife, so he will much motivate her to do all duty to him. A small gift as an action of kindness freely given, not upon any debt but in testimony of love, does more work on the heart of her to whom it is given than much more given upon contract, or for a work done, by which it may seem to be deserved.

In giving gifts to a wife, a husband ought to be more bountiful and generous than to others, so that she may see by it that he loves her above all—as it is noted that Elkanah gave Hannah a double portion because he loved her (1Sa 1:5). And, in giving gifts, it is best to give them with his own hands, unless he is absent from her.

Husbands Abusing⁶⁴ Their Wives

Against this are the furious and bitter actions of many unkind husbands (with heads too heady)⁶⁵ whose favors are buffets,⁶⁶ blows, strokes, and stripes, in which they are *worse* than the venomous viper. For the viper casts out his poison for his mate's sake;⁶⁷ and will not you, O husband, regarding the close union that is between you and your wife, lay aside your fierceness and cruelty? Many wives by reason of their husband's fury are in worse situation than servants, for those who will not hit a servant care not what load they lay upon their wives. Where servants have only a set time to be under the tyranny of such furious men, poor wives are tied to them all their life long. Wives cannot have so good a remedy by the help of law against cruel husbands as servants may have against cruel masters. Masters have not such opportunity to exercise their cruelty over servants as husbands over wives, who are to be continually at board and bed with their husbands. The nearer wives are and the dearer they ought to be to their husbands, the more horrible must be striking when it comes by a husband's hand than by a master's. Since a husband has less power and authority to strike his wife than a master to strike a servant, his striking seems all the heavier, and the wife's situation is worse than a servant. Therefore such a man (if he may be thought a man rather than a beast) is rightly said to be like a father-killer and mother-killer.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Gouge addresses the disturbing subject of what we call “domestic abuse” today, a calamitous reality for us today. The editors have substituted the word *abuse* instead of *beating* at certain points.

⁶⁵ **heads too heady** – too rash and violent.

⁶⁶ **buffets** – repeated blows, typically from the hand or fist.

⁶⁷ Gouge cites Basil (c. 329–379), who in his *Hexaemeron* (7.6) said a viper spit out its venom before mating with a sea lamprey [primitive eel-like, jawless fish]. Basil wrote, “Let husbands listen as well: here is a lesson for them. The viper vomits forth its venom in respect for marriage; and you, will you not put aside the barbarity and the inhumanity of your soul, out of respect for your union?” (Basil of Caesarea, “The Hexaemeron,” in St. Basil: Letters and Select Works, ed. Philip Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, vol. 8, 93) The fable of the viper comes from Claudius Aelianus (c. 175–c. 235), *On the Nature of Animals*.

⁶⁸ Gouge cites John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), who argued that since a man must leave his parents for the sake of a wife (Gen 2:24), striking a wife is *worse* than striking down our parents (*Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, homily 26): “For surely it comes of extreme lawlessness when thy partner of life, she who in the most intimate relations and in the highest degree, is united with thee; when she, like a

Question: May not then a husband beat his wife?

Answer: With submission to better judgments, I think he may not. My reasons are these:

1. There is no authorization throughout the whole Scripture by precept or example for it. Though this argument is from silence, for the point in hand it is forceful in two respects. First, because the Scripture has so abundantly and particularly declared the various duties of husbands and wives, and yet has given *nothing* concerning a husband's striking and abusing his wife. Secondly, because it has also abundantly and particularly spoken of all those who are to correct, and of their manner of correcting, and of their bearing correction who are to be corrected, and of the use they are to make of it. Yet it says *nothing at all* concerning a husband's punishing or a wife's enduring it like this. The Scripture being so silent in this point, we may well deduce that God has not ranked wives among those in the family who are to be corrected with the rod.

2. That small difference of rank that is between husband and wife does not permit so high a power in a husband, and so low a slavery in a wife, as for him to beat her. Can it be thought reasonable that she who shares a man's bed all their lives, who has power over his body, is a joint parent of the children, a joint governor of the family, should be beaten by his hands? What if children or servants should know of it? (Surely they must, for how can such a thing be done in the house and they of the household not know?) Can they respect her as a mother or a mistress who is under correction as well as they?

3. The intimate relationship and true union that is between husband and wife *does not allow such dealing to pass between them*. The wife is as a man's self: "They two are one flesh" (Eph 5:31). No man but an insane, furious, desperate wretch will beat himself. Two sorts of men are in Scripture noted to cut and lance their own flesh: idolaters as the worshipers of Baal (1Ki 18:28) and demoniacs, as he that was possessed with a legion of devils (Mar 5:5, 9). Such are they who beat their wives, either blinded in their understanding or possessed with a devil.

Objection: He that is clearest in his mind will suffer his body to be stuck with a needle, cut, lanced, and otherwise hurt, if it is needed and appropriate.

Answer: First, a man's heart will not allow him to do any of these himself. There are surgeons whose office it is to do such things. If the surgeon himself has need of any such remedy for his own body, he will use the help of another surgeon. If the case is such that a wife must be beaten [as punishment for a criminal act], it is better for a husband to refer the matter to a public magistrate (who is as an approved and licensed surgeon) and

base slave, is dishonored by thee. Wherefore also such a man, if indeed one must call him a man and not rather a wild beast, I should say, was like a parricide [one who murders his father or either parent] and a murderer of his mother. For if for a wife's sake we were commanded to leave even father and mother, not wronging them but fulfilling a divine law...what but extreme frenzy can it be to insult her for whose sake God bade us leave even our parents?" (John Chrysostom, "Homily 26" in *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, ed. Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, First Series, vol. 12, 155)

not to do it with his own hands.⁶⁹ Secondly, though some parts of the body may be so dealt with, yet every part may not, such as the heart, which the wife is to the man. Thirdly, the comparison does not hold. For sticking with a needle, lancing, etc., is not punishment for any fault, as the beating of a wife in question is. There is no question but a man that has skill may if necessary open a vein, lance a boil, or splint a broken bone or disjunct joint in his wife's body, which may be more painful than correction, and here the comparison holds, but not in the other.

Objection: There is as close a relationship between Christ and His church, as between husband and wife, yet Christ does not refrain to correct and discipline His church.

Answer: There is a double relation between Christ and the church. He is a husband to it, having made it "of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph 5:30), and a supreme Lord over it, having all power in heaven and earth committed to Him (Mat 28:18). In this latter respect He disciplines, not in the former. A husband is not such a supreme lord over his wife; therefore Christ's example is no authorization to him.

4. There is no hope of any good to come from a husband's abusing of his wife, for where the party corrected is persuaded that the party which corrects has no authority or right so to do, it will not be brought patiently to take it, but will resist and strive if possible to get the mastery. Let a stranger strike such an older child or a servant as will patiently bear many strikes at a parent's or master's hand, they will turn again at that stranger and try to give as good as he brings. Now a wife having no ground to be persuaded that her husband has authority to beat her, what hope is there that she will patiently bear it and be bettered by it? Or rather is it not likely that she will, if she can, rise against him, overcome him (as many do), and never do any duty correctly? A fault in a wife is not taken away but increased by blows.

Objection: Stings and pain may make her dread her husband, stand in awe of him, and do her duty the better.

Answer: Such dread and awe fits neither the position of a husband to demand it nor the position of a wife to yield it. Though she may be brought to yield some outward submission, yet inward hatred to her husband's person may be joined to it, which is as bad, if not worse, than outward disobedience.

Objection: She may be of so furious a disposition as, except by force, she will not be kept in any boundaries.

Answer: First, it has been of old time answered that "no fault should be so great as to compel a husband to beat his wife."⁷⁰ Furthermore, other forceful means may be used besides beating by her husband's hands. She may be denied some of her privileges that she enjoys, and, if no other means will serve the purpose, be put over to the magistrate's

⁶⁹ Corporal punishment such as flogging was part of the British judicial system until the mid-twentieth century. Thus Gouge says that in the case of criminal activity, the husband should rely on the judicial system, not his own punishment.

⁷⁰ Gouge again cites John Chrysostom, homily 26 on 1 Corinthians (see note 3 above). His actual statement appears to have been the following: "And to you husbands also this I say: make it a rule that there can be no such offence as to bring you under the necessity of striking a wife."

hands that if she be of so despicable⁷¹ a disposition, as by no other means she will be kept under than by fear and force, by hurt and pain, she may fear the magistrate and feel his hand, rather than her husband's.

Objection: If a wife becomes so bold, or rather insane, as to threaten to strike and beat her husband, may he not in that case beat her to make her cease her fury?

Answer: I do not doubt that the good provision that is made in law to preserve a man's life may be applied to this purpose. The law simply condemns all murder, yet if a man be so assaulted as there is no way to preserve his own life but by taking away his life that assaults him it does not condemn him as a murderer because he did it in self-defense.

So if a husband is set upon by his wife, it is lawful and helpful that he defend himself; and if he can do it no other way but by striking her that is not to be reckoned an unlawful abuse of her.

Bearing with⁷² Her Weaknesses

To this point, we have covered the husband's *avoiding* of offense; now I will speak a word concerning his *bearing* with offense.

It is a general duty, common to all, to bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2), in which even a wife is to bear her husband's burdens because he, as everyone else, is subject to slip and fall and so needs to be supported. Yet after a more special and particular manner does this duty belong to a husband and that in two respects.

1. Of the two, he is more obligated than his wife because, in relation to his wife, he is the stronger; for she is the weaker vessel (1Pe 3:7). But the strong are most obligated to "bear the infirmities of the weak" (Rom 15:1).⁷³

2. He is obligated to bear patiently with his wife more than with any other, because of that close relationship which is between them. He that cannot bear with his wife—*his flesh* (Gen 2:23-24)—can bear with nobody.

The reason given by the apostle to move a man to dwell with his wife according to knowledge, and to give honor to her, implied in this phrase, "as unto the weaker vessel" (1Pe 3:7), shows that this is a particular duty belonging to a husband in which he may both show his knowledge and wisdom, and also honor his wife. For why is he reminded of her weakness, but to show he should bear with her patiently?

As that phrase implies the duty, so also it implies a good reason to enforce it. For precious things that we highly value, the weaker they are, the more tenderly and carefully are they handled—as china dishes and crystal glasses; and of all parts of the body, the eye is most tenderly handled. Now what things, what persons, are more dear and pre-

⁷¹ **despicable** – fully deserving of contempt; vile.

⁷² **bearing with** – patience with.

⁷³ Importantly, the next verse explains that we all, even the weak, have an obligation to please our neighbor and not ourselves (Rom 15:2).

cious than a wife? Yet for all that, she is a weak vessel; therefore, she is much to be borne with patiently.

For a husband's better direction here, difference must be made between weaknesses. Some are natural imperfections, others are actual transgressions. Natural imperfections are inward (as slowness in mind, dullness in understanding, shortness of memory, quickness in strong emotions, etc.) or outward (as lameness, blindness, deafness, or any other defect and deformity of body). These infirmities should cause pity, compassion, sympathy, and even greater tenderness and respect, but no offense. Note Abraham's example in this case: his wife was barren, yet he did not despise her for it, nor did he accuse her with any such thing.

Actual transgressions are violations of God's Law, and such are meant here that most directly tend to his⁷⁴ own disturbance and disadvantage, as argumentativeness, insisting on her own way, being picky, stubbornness, etc. In bearing these, a husband must especially show his wisdom in various ways.

1. By using the best and gentlest means he can to cure them, as meek admonition, seasonable advice, gentle appeal, and compassionate affection. Elkanah, supposing that his wife did wrong in her strong emotions, thus dealt with her and supported her (1Sa 1:8).

2. By removing the stone over which she stumbles, by taking away the cause (so far as conveniently⁷⁵ he can) which makes her to do wrong. Thus Abraham, by God's advice, put Hagar and her son out of the house because they were an offense to Sarah (Gen 21:14).

3. By turning his eyes away (if the matter be not great, but may be tolerated) and taking no notice of the offense, but rather passing by it as if he perceived it not. Solomon says that it is a man's glory to pass over a transgression (Pro 19:11), and he exhorts a man not to give his heart to all the words that men speak (Ecc 7:21).

4. By forgiving and forgetting it if notice is taken of it. Jacob took notice of Rachel's wrath and stubborn demand, for he rebuked her for it; yet, since he willingly yielded to that which afterwards she asked him to (Gen 30), it appears that he forgave the offense, if not forgot it.

The best test of a man's affection to his wife and of his wisdom in ordering the same is in this point of bearing with offenses. Not to be offended with a wife that gives no offense is not praiseworthy; pagan men may go so far. Notice what Christ says of this case, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" (Mat 5:46; cf. Luk 6:32-33). Gently to bear with and wisely to pass over offenses when they are given, not to be provoked when there is cause of provocation given, is a true Christian virtue—a virtue fitting husbands better than any other kind of men.

⁷⁴ **his** – her husband's.

⁷⁵ **conveniently** – properly.

Quickness to anger

Contrary is quickness to anger and irritability, when husbands are moved with the least provocation, like tinder catching fire at the least spark that falls upon it. Many are like gunpowder, which not only takes fire but also breaks out into a violent flame upon the least touch of fire. As gunpowder is dangerous to be kept in a house, so are such husbands to be joined so nearly to wives as marriage joins them. If it be said that, as gunpowder does no hurt if fire come not at it, so they are good and kind if they be not provoked and displeased, I answer that we have a proverb that says, “The devil is good while he is pleased,” yet it is not safe to have the devil too near. It is as impossible (considering man’s weakness) that he should live and keep company with any and not give offense, as for flint stones to beat and dash against one another repeatedly and no spark of fire come from them. How then may it be thought possible for a wife, who is so continually keeping company with her husband, and the weaker vessel, to live without giving him offense? It is no very kind speech, which husbands use, especially if they be told of their unkindness: “Let my wife deserve favor, and she shall have it.” How little favor would such husbands have from Christ their Husband (Jer 31:32), if He should have that attitude toward them?

Thus far has been handled the first part of a husband’s well managing his authority, by a tender respect of his wife. The second is a provident care for her.

5. A Husband’s Provision for His Wife

A husband that tenderly respects his wife, but does not providently care for her, shows more affection than discretion. He may have a kind heart, but he lacks a wise head. How then can he be a good head to his wife? Some short-term happiness she may have by him, but small profit and benefit can she reap from him. Those duties, therefore, that have been delivered must be done, but these that follow must by no means be left undone.

A husband’s provident care is noted in that office of Christ, in which a husband resembles Him, namely, to be a “saviour of the body” (Eph 5:23). It consists in providing things needed by his wife and in protecting her from things harmful to her.

Provision of Things Needful for Her

A careful *providing of things needed* is a most important part of that honor which husbands are to give to their wives. For where the apostle says that elders are worthy of double honor (1Pe 3:7; 1Ti 5:17), he means financial support as well as respect. The apostle counts him worse than an infidel that provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own house (1Ti 5:8). Who are of a husband’s house, if not his wife? In his

house, who more properly *his own* than his wife? If then a husband does not provide for his wife, what is he to be counted?

There is great reason why he should provide for her because he has taken her from her parents and friends, has received the portion that they allotted her, has authority committed to him over her, and she is put in submission under him. Her friends, having given away her portion, their power over her, and committed all to him, will no longer take care of her. She, being in submission under him, cannot without him provide for herself. Who then shall provide for her if he does not, whose wholly and only she is?

Contrary is the mind of those who take a wife only for their own happiness, delight, or gain, and never think of the responsibility that together with a wife they take upon themselves. Having the same attitude are those who, when they have a wife, neglect her in everything but what is necessary to accomplish their own purposes. Much have they to answer for, and so much the more because a wife is a special pledge⁷⁶ of God's favor (Pro 18:22).

Provision of Means for Her Spiritual Edification

In this provident care that a husband ought to have of his wife, we will consider the extent and duration of it. It ought to extend both to herself and to others; regarding herself, to her soul and body.

For her *soul*, means of spiritual edification must be provided, and those both private and public. Private means are holy and religious exercises in the house, as reading the Word, prayer, catechizing,⁷⁷ etc. These, being the spiritual food of the soul, are to be provided and used every day, as our bodily food. A husband as a master of a family must provide these for the good of his whole house; but as a husband, especially for the good of his wife. To his wife, as well as to the whole house, he is a king, a priest, and a prophet.

By himself therefore, for his wife's good, he should perform these things or provide that they may be done by some other. Cornelius himself performed those exercises (Act 10:2, 30). Micah hired a Levite, and though his idolatry was evil, yet his care to have a Levite in his house was commendable (Jdg 17:10). The Shunammite's husband provided a room for the prophet especially for his wife's sake, for it was at her request (2Ki 4:8-11).

Public means are the holy ordinances of God publicly performed by God's minister. The care of a husband for his wife in this respect is so to order his place of residence, and provide other needed things, that his wife may be made partaker of it. It is expressly noted of Elkanah that he so provided for his wives that they went with him every year to the house of God (1Sa 1, 2); the same is implied of Joseph, the husband of Mary (Luk 2:41). In those days, there was a public place and house of God to which all God's people (how-

⁷⁶ **pledge** – sign.

⁷⁷ **catechizing** – instructing orally by means of questions and answers. See *Spurgeon's Catechism*, and a simplified version of it, *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*, by Erroll Hulse, both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

ever far they dwelt from it) were to return every year. The places where Elkanah and Joseph dwelt were far from the house of God; yet they so provided that, not only they themselves, but also their wives went to the public worship of God. Now there are many houses of God—places for the public worship of God—but yet through the corruption of our times, the ministry of the Word (the most important means of spiritual edification) is not everywhere to be enjoyed. Therefore such ought a husband's care for his wife in this respect to be, as to dwell where she may have the benefit of the preaching of the Word, or else so to provide for her as she may weekly go where it may be had.

If men of wisdom and ability purchase or build a house for their residence, they will be sure it shall be where sweet rivers and waters are, and good pasture ground, and where all necessary provision may be had. God's Word preached is a spring of water of life; the place where it is preached a pleasant, profitable pasture; all necessary provision for the soul may there be had. Let this therefore be most of all sought after and no residence settled but where this may be had.

Neglecting her edification

Their practice is opposed who, having their vocation⁷⁸ in places where the Word is plentiful, yet upon outward respects of pleasure, delight, ease, and profit, move their families into remote places where preaching is scarce, if at all, and there leave their wives to govern the family, not regarding their lack of the Word; for as much as they themselves, often coming to London or other similar places by reason of their vocation, enjoy the Word themselves. Many businessmen, lawyers, and others are guilty of great neglect of their wives in this respect.

So also are those who abandon all religious exercise in their houses, making their houses more like hothouses of the devil than churches of God. If for lack of means, either public or private, a wife lives and dies in ignorance, profaneness, unbelief, and unrepentance, which cause eternal damnation, surely her blood shall be required at his hands; for a husband is God's watchman to his wife (Eze 3:18).

Provision of Things Needful for Her Body

A husband's provident care of his wife must extend also to the body, both in health and sickness. In health, by providing such things as are needed to preserve health, as sufficient food, clothing, and similar necessities. Where the prophet, to show how bad will be the misery of the people, says, "Seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name" (Isa 4:1), he implies that it was a husband's duty to provide food and clothing, that is, all necessities for his wife; which the Law of Moses also implies, where it commands him that takes a second wife not to diminish the food and clothing of the former (Exo 21:10). In sickness, such things are to be provided as are needed either to restore her health, or to comfort, cherish, and refresh her in her sickness.

⁷⁸ **vocation** – employment.

Provident care about her child-bearing

Most proper to this place is that provident care that husbands ought to have of their wives both before and in the time of their labor and childbirth, in two things especially.

First, in obtaining for their wives to the utmost of their power and ability such things as may satisfy their cravings, in case they do crave some food (as in all ages women in the time of breeding and bearing children have been subject to). For it is well known that it is very dangerous both for mother and child to lack what she craves. The death, sometimes of the one, sometimes of the other, sometimes of both, has followed as a result.⁷⁹

Secondly, in providing such things as are needed for their labor and childbirth. This time is especially to be provided for in many respects.

1. Because it is a time of weakness, in which the woman cannot well provide for herself.

2. Because her weakness is joined with much pain. The pain of a woman in labor is the greatest pain that ordinarily is endured by any for the time. None know it so well as they that feel it; and many husbands, because they are not so subject, think little of it. If we duly weigh that the Holy Spirit, when He would set forth the extremity of any pains and sufferings, compares them to the pains of a woman in labor, we may well deduce that, of all, they are the greatest (Psa 48:6; Isa 13:8; 21:3; Jer 4:31; 30:6; Mic 4:9). This is further shown by the screams and cries that not only weak and faint-hearted women utter in the time of their labor, but also are forced from the strongest and toughest women that are, and that though beforehand they resolve to the contrary.

Neither should we be surprised at this, for their body is as it were set on a rack (at least if the labor is sharp) and all their parts so stretched, as a wonder it is they should ever recover their health and strength again, or that they should endure the shock of it and not die with their labor, as Rachel (Gen 35:16-19) and the wife of Phinehas (1Sa 4:19-20), and many in all ages have done.⁸⁰ Surely among ordinary deliverances, I know none so near a miracle, none in which the Almighty does so evidently manifest His great power and good providence as in the safe delivery of women.

Besides the great pains of labor, women are also after their delivery subject to many agonies that are very painful. From all these pains and great weakness that happen to women in childbirth, especially if they nurse their children, men are freed by reason of their sex. To apply this point, seeing women are brought to such pains and weakness in bringing forth those children that are the man's as well as hers, and he freed from all, is it not very just and fitting that he should provide all things needed for her wellbeing, rest, and recovery of strength?

⁷⁹ In the seventeenth century, people recognized the serious effects of a mother's diet upon her unborn child, and it was believed that the unmet cravings of a pregnant woman could harm her baby.

⁸⁰ In 2010, in the United States, the maternal death rate was about 1 in 5,000, but in early modern England it may have been around 1 in 100. Since many women had several children, a significant number of women died in childbirth.

3. Because the lack of things needed is at that time very dangerous, dangerous to the health and life of the woman and child also.

Neglecting her in weakness

Against a husband's provident care in general are those vices that were covered in a previous chapter⁸¹ on mutual duties, such as resenting the responsibilities placed on a wife, greed, extravagant spending, and laziness.

But working against a husband's care for his wife in childbirth in particular, is the inhumane and more than barbarous unkindness of many husbands, who do not consider the weakness of their wives in this case, to help, rest, and comfort them, but rather make their burden much heavier. For some through greed refuse beforehand to give means to their wife to provide such things as are needed for herself and the child; and when the time comes, if their wife desires a midwife⁸² that charges somewhat more than the next, she shall have none if she will not have the next. And as for a nurse to tend her, they think their maid will serve well enough; they need not pay the charges to bring a nurse into the house. Regarding convenient lodging some will say, "Cannot my wife be put in a bed in a room without a chimney⁸³ as well as the virgin Mary? Why should my wife need more things than she did?" Furthermore, there are many that, when the time that their wife should be delivered approaches, carry her from all her friends into a place where she is not known, lest her friends should beg him to spend and lay out more upon his wife than he is willing. In the time while their wife is weak in childbirth, many hate to allow them any other diet than is for themselves and children provided in the house, not considering that her stomach cannot be like theirs.

Many other such bitter fruits of unkind husbands arising from covetousness might be reckoned up, by which husbands plainly show that they love their wealth better than their wives; they had rather lose *them* than part with *that*.

Others, through jealous suspicion, do not refrain even in the time of their wives' pain and weakness to accuse them with foolish words and say that the child is not theirs! To accuse a wife of this unjustly is at any time a most shameful and hateful disgrace; but in the time of childbirth, whether just or unjust, a thing too bitter and vengeful. Some wives are so far overcome (especially in the time of their weakness) that they are not able to bear it, but even faint and die under the disgrace. Others of stronger constitution vow never to know⁸⁴ their husbands again. Many similar troubles follow from such unkindness.

⁸¹ See chapter 6 of Volume 2 in the Reformation Heritage Books series, *Building a Godly Home*, "Guarding Each Other's Health, Reputation, and Property."

⁸² Births took place at home attended by a midwife, not in a hospital attended by a doctor.

⁸³ **room without a chimney** – without central heating and insulation, a room with no fireplace became very cold in winter.

⁸⁴ **know** – have marital intimacy with.

Providing according to his estate and ability

In a husband's providing for the body of his wife, consideration must be given to the measure and to the manner.

The *measure* must match his ability, for a husband ought to support his wife in as good an estate and fashion as himself. By marriage, she is advanced to as high an estate and dignity in relation to others as he is, and for her own use she is made a partner of all his goods, and accordingly should share in them.

For the *manner*, he must allow her (if at least he observes her to have any sufficient wisdom) to order such things as needed for herself according to her best liking.

Both in the measure and in the manner of providing, there must be a difference made between a wife and servants or children. These may have their portions of food, clothing, and similar necessities proportioned and limited to them, which is unfitting to be done to a wife. Neither is it necessary that so plentiful a provision be made for them as for her.

Stinginess to his wife

A husband's stingy dealing with his wife is against his duty of providing for her, when the allowance she has is both far under his estate and also given her only a little bit at a time, as if she were a child. Many husbands make their wives slave away at home, eat sparingly, and dress poorly; who are themselves showy in clothing, party and feast away from home, and so exceed their wives that they are ashamed to be seen in company with them. They who marry their maids, or others of lower rank than themselves, often so deal with them, esteeming them but as servants and low persons though they be their wives. But it has been before shown that wives by marriage are advanced to their husband's dignity, however low they were before.

Allowing Her to Give to Others

So far ought the provident care of a husband for his wife to extend, as she may have (beside things necessary to herself) to give to those to whom it is required for her to give, such as children and servants in the house, and others also out of the house. This is noted in Solomon's description of a good wife, "She...giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens" (Pro 31:15), and "all her household are clothed with scarlet"—that is, by her planning and managing the matter (v. 21). "Her children arise up, and call her blessed" (v. 28) for her general conduct in the family, as for her particular favors given to them. As for others outside of the household, it is also noted that "she stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy" (v. 20). These things she did by virtue of that power and liberty which her husband gave her, as appears by two points noted there:

1. In that, before any mention is made of those things that she did, it is said, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (v. 11).
2. In that, after all her good deeds are reckoned up, it is said, "Her husband...praiseth her" (v. 28).

It is good that other husbands (whose wives are wise and faithful) should deal with their wives according to this pattern, that in the house they might have more honor from children and servants, and that outside of the house they might give better testimony of their charity.

For consider the many excellent promises that are made to works of mercy and charity and the many terrible threats that are pronounced not only against those who exercise cruelty, but also against those who show no mercy. Considering also that wives together with their husbands are “heirs of the grace of life” (1Pe 3:7), it is very necessary that they should manifest their faith by some work of mercy and charity. Now unless her husband gives her something at her own discretion to give to others, true and thorough trial of her merciful and charitable mind cannot be made. If she gives of that which her husband has reserved to himself, as her giving is against God’s Law, so she may be thought generous, but actually is not merciful because, despite her generous giving, she gives up nothing of her own. Even though she has a general consent to give as she sees cause of the common possessions of the family, that is not so sure and sound a test of her charity and mercifulness, as if she had something of her own which she might keep or give away as pleases herself; and what she does not give away, lay up as her own savings belonging to herself.

There is naturally such a self-love in man and a desire to keep that which belongs to one’s self that he really hates to let go of any of it, unless conscience and grace alter this corruption of nature and so move him willingly to give out something for charitable uses. But otherwise of that which in whole or in part belongs to another (be that other husband, parent, master, friend, or any else), he is easily moved to be generous and bountiful. A man will gladly cut a large piece (as we speak) out of someone else’s leather.

It is known that many children and servants, who have been generous of their parents’ and masters’ possessions to the poor, are very stingy and miserly when they come to be owners of their own. Those who share in savings will be much more eager in giving away that which is common with another than that which belongs to each of them. The truest test of a merciful and charitable heart lies in the distribution of what is one’s own property.

It is therefore fitting upon this very ground that a husband should, according to his ability, let his wife have some savings and portion of her own, free to dispose of as she sees good, telling her that the most important reason why he provides so plentifully for her is that she may show forth the fruits of her faith by some works of charity, and exhorting her so to do. Many religious, wise, kind husbands thus do, some giving quarterly allowance in money to their wives, others giving their wives power to receive a certain portion of rent out of certain lands or houses, others granting their wives an absolute ownership of some inheritance, and allowing them to receive the profits and revenues of it, others giving them certain fees of their offices or of their trade; others, that are poor, allowing them to work for themselves, and manage their earnings as they see cause, some one way, some another. Everyone in his position best knows the means how to

gratify his wife in this way. It shall be sufficient for me to have laid down the general rule.

Too great strictness over their wives

Against this is the tight-fistedness to their wives of those who allow them no more than may be for their own personal use. They think it a great matter, and as much as a husband is bound to do, to let her have clothing, food, drink, and such necessities as are appropriate for her rank; but all other additions they think unnecessary. Thus their wives are not only deprived of means to gain respect from their children and servants at home and to reward those who are obedient and ready to do service to them, but also to perform such works of mercy as both opportunity requires and also their conscience moves them to do. Yes, many wives of rich husbands are brought to great shame by this, being in places where there is a good opportunity to contribute to some charitable cause; and by reason of their rich and costly clothing, it is expected they should be bountiful, but they have nothing at all to give.

The fault of some husbands in this respect is great in many ways. They bring shame and grief to their wives, to whom they should show consideration with all tenderness. They dishonor their own positions; for they who take notice of this strictness to their wives will be ready to judge them both greedy and unkind. They will be held responsible for the omitting of that work of mercy that their wives should have done. They shall hear that dreadful doom, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat” (Mat 25:41-42); and if they answer, When did we see Thee hungry? it shall be replied, In that you did not allow your wives to do it, you did it not.

This ends the extent of a husband’s provident care for the good of his wife. It follows to speak of the duration of it.

Provision so Long as She Shall Live

The *duration* of a husband’s provident care for his wife must be so long as she lives, even though she outlives him, not that he can actually when he is dead provide for her, but that he may before his death so provide for her as she may have the means to support herself and to live according to that position where he advanced her. At least that he should leave her not only so much as he had with her, but something more also in testimony of his love to her and care for her. Husbands have the example of Christ to press this duty upon them, for when He went away from His church here on earth, He left His Spirit, which provided her with gifts as plentifully as if Christ had still remained with her, if not more abundantly (Eph 4:8).

To better perform this duty, husbands who die before their wives must observe among other things, two especially.

1. That plainly and explicitly⁸⁵ they declare their mind and will before they die, lest their wife should be taken advantage of and cheated of that which they intended them.

⁸⁵ **explicitly** – clearly expressed; with nothing remaining in doubt; unequivocally.

Thus did David upon the motion of Bathsheba; he settled his estate and caused Bathsheba's son to be actually crowned before he himself died—which he did, as for other weighty reasons, so in particular for his wife's good, as may be gathered from that reason she gave to the king in these words, "Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders" (1Ki 1:21).

2. That he request some faithful friend in his place to be a helper to her, as Christ commended His mother to His disciple John (Joh 19:16, 27), which will be necessary regarding her weakness and lack of experience to manage such affairs, especially as are outside of the household.

At the time of a man's departure out of this world from his wife will the truest test of his affection to his wife be given; for many that provide for their wives while they live with them, at their death show that there was no soundness of affection in their heart towards them. All was but a mere show for some hidden agenda.

Neglect of her future estate

The various practices of unkind husbands are against this.

1. Some through lack of planning or extravagant spending make themselves unable to do good to their wives after their death, and so leave their wives nothing, or (that which is worse than nothing) in debt, and with a great responsibility for the children. The care that husbands ought to have of their wives should make them think beforehand of the time to come, and even for their wives' sake be somewhat the more diligent, thrifty, and prepared, and cut off many unnecessary expenses, or their sin is doubled: first by a needless wasting of their estate and second by neglecting their wives.

2. Others by flattering or forceful means draw their wives to give up the rights they have in money, possessions, house, or land by jointure,⁸⁶ inheritance, or any other way, and yet make them no sufficient payment in another way, but at their death leave their wives in a far worse estate than they were in before marriage, beside a greater charge⁸⁷ than they had before. As this is a great part of unkindness, so also [it is] a main point of injustice.

3. Others, resenting the laws under which they live for providing for a wife a third⁸⁸ of his estate or otherwise, use all the fraudulent means they can to deprive her of that which otherwise the law would lay upon her. The civil laws of the place where we live ought to be the rule of our civil actions (so far as they are not contrary to God's Word), and we ought for conscience sake to be subject to them (Rom 13:5). Besides, a husband ought (though the law does not force him) to leave at least a third to his wife, as a testimony of his love and care for her. This also is a double fault, both a transgression of the law and a note of unkindness.

⁸⁶ **jointure** – arrangement for a wife's financial provision after her husband dies.

⁸⁷ **greater charge** – greater responsibility (perhaps in household, family, or financial obligations).

⁸⁸ **third** – English common law assigned a third of the inheritance to the widow, and two-thirds to the heirs.

4. Others, having aged and sickly wives, or otherwise thinking that their wives may, or rather hoping that their wives will, die before themselves, put off the making of their wills with the purpose that they might not put in their wives' third, but use them some other way. Besides the fact that such a husband shows no good affection toward his wife, he provokes God to disappoint him of his hopes, as He often does, for He takes him away before his wife—and so takes him away as having not time to make his will; [then] not only does his wife enjoy her third (which he so much desired to avoid), but also some others (whom of all in his lifetime he disliked) seize upon the other two parts.

Protection from Danger

Having showed how a husband is to provide things necessary for his wife, it remains to show how he is to protect her from things harmful to her. Regarding the protection that a husband owes his wife, he is called “a covering of the eyes” (Gen 20:16), which phrase implies submission on the wife's part, and also protection on the husband's. To protect one is, as it were, to cover them, namely, from danger; to be negligent and careless of them is, as it were, to lay them open to danger. The same duty is implied under another phrase of “spreading his wing” over his wife (Ruth 3:9).⁸⁹ The metaphor is taken from winged fowls, which to keep their young ones from hurt, use to spread their wings over them. This phrase and metaphor is also attributed to God, to set forth His protection (Ruth 2:12).

But most pertinent to this purpose is the title, “saviour,” given to a husband in relation to his wife (Eph 5:23). For this end, the Lord, Who subjected a woman to her husband, gave to his sex greater strength, courage, and boldness than to hers that he might protect her who is the weaker vessel. In this duty of protection, Christ shows Himself an excellent pattern and example for husbands.

To better perform this duty, a husband must be careful to prevent, as much as he may, such dangers as his wife is likely to fall into and to rescue her out of those that she falls into. For this purpose David took his wives into Gath lest, if they were left in Israel, Saul should cause them some trouble (1Sa 27:3); and again, when they were taken by the Amalekites, he rescued them (1Sa 30:18). According to that danger to which wives are subject must a husband's care of protecting his wife be shown.

1. If she is in danger of being seduced and enticed, as Eve was, by any evil instruments of the devil, as Jesuits, priests, friars,⁹⁰ profane, blasphemous, immoral, or out-of-control persons, his care must be either to keep them away that they do not come to her or to get them away from her so soon as he can. He may not tolerate them to stay in his house.

⁸⁹ In Ruth 3:9, the KJV reads, “Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid.” The Hebrew word translated “skirt” can also be rendered “wing” or “edge.”

⁹⁰ **Jesuits...friars** – members of Roman Catholic orders operating in England in the 16th and 17th centuries to undermine the faith of the Reformation.

2. If by any trick she is drawn from his house, he must seek her and get her again, as the Levite did his wife (Jdg 19:2), or cause her (if he can) to be brought home again, as David caused Michal to be brought (2Sa 3:13-14), especially if they are taken away by force, as were David's wives Ahinoam and Abigail (1Sa 30:18).

3. If she is unjustly slandered, he is to maintain her honor and reputation as much as his own; as Christ counts Himself despised when His church is, so must he (Luk 10:16). This concern he must have of his wife's credit even after her death, as well as while she lives.

4. Whatever other trouble is intended or practiced against her, he must be a tower of defense to protect her, as Ahasuerus was to Esther against Haman (Est 7:7-8), and not only against strangers outside the house, but also against children and servants in the house. Children grown older who are proud and stubborn will be ready to rise up against their mother, especially if she is a step-mother, because she is the weaker sex. The presence of a father is most effective, generally speaking, to maintain respect in the home. Therefore, the husband must be a help to his wife and maintain her honor against them, even though they are children of a former wife.

Supporting her against children of a previous relationship and servants

Objection: Step-mothers often prove unkind and unjust mothers, and deal unmercifully with their husband's children. Must a husband in such cases assist his wife against his children?

Answer: The protection I speak of is, if a wife is wronged, then her husband is to do what he can to defend her rights. But if she is the wrong-doer, he may by no means support her against his children, and so make their wrong the greater. Yet so far ought he to respect his wife, as by all the fair means he can, to labor to pacify her mind and turn her heart towards them, and if he observes her heart to be completely alienated from them, then to send them out to be brought up in some other place, and so to take away from her the object of her displeasure that he and she may live more quietly together.⁹¹ For if a man must forsake father and mother, he must also forsake children and cleave to his wife. Peace and unity between husband and wife must be kept sacred. "Though you cast away all, nothing more troublesome can happen to you than not to have a quiet wife at home. You cannot find sin more grievous than to have fights with your wife."⁹²

If a wife must be supported against the stubbornness of children, much more against the insolence of servants, for which purpose the example of Abraham is recorded, whose maid-servant might have privilege above other because he had slept with her. Yet when she grew insolent against her mistress, first he put her into her mistress's hand to do to her as it pleased her, and afterwards he cast her out of his house (Gen 16:6; 21:14).

⁹¹ This should be balanced with the apostolic command for fathers to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). Fathers must not abandon them.

⁹² Gouge again cites Chrysostom's 26th homily on 1 Corinthians.

Neglecting to maintain her

The lawless carelessness of husbands, who care no more to help and assist their wives than any other person, works against this.

1. Some more fear to offend their wives than they care to do them good, and in that respect they let any sort of people come to their wives that are welcome to them. If magistrates in a nation shall answer for allowing seditious⁹³ men to come into their dominions to deceive their people, much more shall husbands answer for allowing them to come and deceive their wives, for several reasons. First, they have a greater responsibility for their wives than magistrates for their people. Secondly, wives ought to be dearer to husbands than people to magistrates. Thirdly, because they may sooner see them in their house than magistrates in the nation. Fourthly, because they may be much more easily kept out of a house than out of a nation or a city.

2. Others do not care where their wives wander; and if they do go out of their house, they shall never be sought after by their husbands. Though this may be a just punishment on wandering wives, yet it is not just for husbands so to deal with them. If Christ our Husband should so deal with us, we should soon be lost, for we often go astray like wandering sheep; but He is that Good Shepherd, Who seeks after the lost sheep until He finds it (Luk 15:1-7).

3. No wonder then that many husbands are no more affected with the bad reports and rumors raised against their wives, when they so little regard who come to them or where they go. Assuredly the dishonor of a wife will turn to the man's dishonor, for as "a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband," so by the rule of contraries, an infamous⁹⁴ wife is a shame to her husband (Pro 12:4). If therefore not for his wife's sake, for his own sake a man ought not to carelessly pass over the bad reports that are raised against his wife.

4. There are such unkind husbands that are not moved with bad treatment given to their wives, nor will hear any complaint that they make to them. Even if they see them mistreated, they will either not seem to see it or but smile at it and so go their way, [allowing] their wives to defend themselves as well as they can. As it fits no Christian to allow his neighbor to be wronged—for it is noted as a commendable matter in Moses, that when he saw two Hebrews striving together, he took his part that had wrong done to him, and reproved the other (Exo 2:13); so much less a husband, to whose safe-keeping his wife is committed. Nature teaches us that the head is as much affected with a wrong done to the body as to itself; so ought a husband be.

5. As the wrong that is done by those who are in submission in the house under the wife is greater than that which is done by strangers, so the husband's fault is the greater in allowing it. He has more power over them in his house than over others. What then may we think of such, as either by their turning a blind eye or by taking sides against their wives, allow both children and servants to jump all over them? Surely those hus-

⁹³ **seditious** – guilty of engaging in or provoking rebellion against the authority of the state.

⁹⁴ **infamous** – having an evil reputation; notorious.

bands themselves will find some taste of the bitter and evil fruit of it, and that not only by that great unhappiness which their wives must take, but also by the contempt that will come on their own persons, both by their wives (who cannot think them good heads to govern others), but also by their children and servants, who will take the opportunity to grow proud and presumptuous against him. By despising the weaker, men grow by little and little to despise the stronger.

This, men of wisdom and experience well know, so that in nations and states governed by wise men, the authority of subordinate magistrates is upheld and maintained. Superior magistrates will not tolerate those who are in authority under them to be despised; for it is well known that it tends not only to the honor and peace, but also to the safety of the supreme magistrate to have the power and authority of subordinate magistrates respected and not trampled under feet. It proves therefore both lack of affection and of discretion and understanding in husbands to allow a child, servant, or any other in the household to insult their wives, who are joint governors with them over the house.

6. A Husband's Sincere and Steady Love for His Wife

The *general matter* together with the particular kinds of husbands' duties being handled so far, the *manner* also of performing them is to be delivered.

To instruct a husband in the manner of performing his duties to his wife, the apostle lays down two patterns: both Christ and ourselves. As Christ loves His church, and as we love ourselves, so must men love their wives. That we may the better follow these patterns, we must distinctly note how Christ loves His church, and how we love ourselves.

A Pattern for Loving: Christ's Love to His Church

The *love of Christ to His church* is commended to us in six distinct points, which are the order, the truth, the cause, the quality, the quantity, and the duration of it.

Loving first

For the *order*, Christ [first] began to love His church; He showed His love to her before she loved Him. As the air heated by the sun is hot and a wall on which the sunbeams shine gives a reflection of heat back again, so the church, as it was heated and warmed in heart by the sense of Christ's love, loved Him—as the apostle plainly notes, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1Jo 4:19); and the church herself acknowledges, saying, “Because of the savour of thy good ointments,” by which we are revived and cheered, “the virgins love thee” (Song 1:3).

There is in us by nature no spark of love at all. If Christ by His loving of us first did not instill love into us, we could no more love Him than a living bird [could] rise out of a cold egg if it were not kept warm by the mother's sitting upon it.

Thus must a husband first begin to love his wife. His place of high rank and authority requires that he should be to his wife "a guide" (Pro 2:17), which title is plainly given to him by the Holy Spirit to teach him to go before her, and by his example to instruct and encourage her to do her duty. What a shame would it be for a man who is the image and glory of God, the head of his wife, in the same position to her that Christ is to His church, to be prompted to love his wife by her conduct (she being the weaker vessel, under him, to learn of him)? There are reasons to stir up a wife to try to go ahead of her husband in doing her duty, which if she does, it is the greater glory to her; but this pattern of Christ should stir him much more to strive to go before her.

Repaying unkindness for love

Their disposition is contrary who, having loving and faithful wives, are notwithstanding not moved to love them again, but are as unkind and rude as if they had the most irritable and perverse wives that could be. But what shall we say of those who love their wives the less, and even hate them for their eagerness to love, and (in testimony of true love) to perform all good duty? What shall we say but that they are truly devils in the flesh? For it is the devil's property to overcome good with evil. These make the doctrine of a wife's submission to seem harsh, and a careful performance of it [to seem] a heavy burden. Never shall they partake of Christ's love, who in their position show themselves so unlike to Christ.

Loving truly

The *truth* of Christ's love was manifested by the fruits of it to His church: He gave Himself for it. It was therefore not in word only, no, nor only in heart, but in action also. Thus, His love proved profitable and beneficial to His church, which by it was cleansed and made a glorious church (Eph 5:26-27). Had He only had a tender compassion and feeling of pity towards it, or labored only with comfortable and sweet words to uphold and assist it, it would still lay filthy with sin, in the power of the devil, and under God's wrath—and so receive no profit and benefit at all.

So must husbands love their wives in truth and in action. Such a love is required of a man to his brother (1Jo 3:18), much more therefore to his wife, who is not only a sister as the apostle expressly calls her (1Co 9:5), but nearer than sister, mother, daughter, friend, or any other whoever. This therefore serves to press the practice of all the duties pertaining to a husband.

*Disguise*⁹⁵

Contrary is their disguise and hypocrisy who make great show of much love and outward shows of earnest affection using many outward compliments, but fail when they come to the truest test, the *action*. Some, like men coming to court and woo a woman,

⁹⁵ **disguise** – deceit.

will promise mountains, but not perform mole hills. Others will snuggle and kiss their wives much, but trust them with nothing nor provide for them things required. Some will weep much when their wives are sick, yet not give medicine for their recovery. Many will carry a fair face their whole life towards their wives, and at their death leave them nothing to live by.

For this reason many, who by others are counted to be very kind husbands, are by their wives found to be far otherwise. If a test is made of husbands' love by their practice and performance of their duties, it will be found that they for the most part come as far short in love as wives in submission.

Loving freely

The *cause* of Christ's love was His love [itself], as Moses notes that God "set his love upon you...because the LORD loved you" (Deu 7:7-8).⁹⁶ His love arose only and wholly from Himself, and was free in every way. As there was nothing in the church before Christ loved her to move Him to love her, so can there be nothing that He could hope for afterwards, but what He gave. Indeed, He delights in that righteousness by which, as with a glorious robe, she is clothed; and with those heavenly graces by which, as with precious jewels, she is adorned. But that righteousness and those graces are His own, and of His free gift, "that he might present it to himself a glorious church" (Eph 5:27).

In imitation of Christ, husbands should love their wives, even if there is nothing in wives to move them so to do, but only because they are their wives, even though no future benefit could after be expected from them. True love gives its attention to the person who is loved, and the good love may do to her, rather than to the person who loves, and the good that he may receive. For love "seeketh not her own" (1Co 13:5).

Christ's love in this branch of it should further move husbands to do what is in their power to make their wives worthy of love.⁹⁷ Thus will it be said in truth that they dwell with their wives according to knowledge (1Pe 3:7), and thus will their love appear to be as Christ's love: *free*.

Loving for his own advantage

Those who love only for their own happiness and advantage are against this. Many can love no further than they may have some bait to attract their affections, as beauty, wealth, honor, or similar reasons, or at least hope of some inheritance or portion above that which they have, or of some favor that they expect from their wives' friends. This cannot be a true sound love. Such a man may be thought to love his wife's beauty, inheritance, and friends rather than his wife. This love cannot last.

⁹⁶ This passage also points to God's faithfulness to His oath, a powerful implication for husbands in connection with their marriage vows.

⁹⁷ Though our author's wording is open to misunderstanding, his point is important: Christ's love makes us Christlike. Conformity to His image is not the ground of His love for us (Phil 3:19), but ought to be valued and praised (Pro 31:25-31). A husband's love should promote Christlikeness in his wife.

Loving in purity

Christ's love, for its *quality*, is a holy, pure, chaste love. As He is, so is His love, as is evident by the effect of it. It moved Him to sanctify and cleanse His church, to make it a glorious church without spot (Eph 5:26-27). He did not therefore make His spouse dirty or unclean; and so, that His love might more clearly appear to be chaste love, cast only upon one spouse and not many, He united all His saints together by the bond of His Spirit and made them all one body (1Co 12:12-13).

By this, husbands must learn so to have such affection towards their wives as may be consistent with holiness and chastity. Though much love be required, it may not overflow those banks. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Heb 13:4). It must therefore be used in purity. This indeed pertains to the wife as well as to the husband. But because he is the head and guide of his wife and ought to be as a pattern and example before her as Christ is before him, therefore is it more especially applied to him. The purity of a husband's love here spoken of has a double use,

1. It limits a husband's love to his own wife. There is a general Christian love by which all occasions of doing good are taken, with which a husband may, and ought, to love others; and a particular matrimonial love, by which he is moved to prefer his wife before all and to have his heart set and fixed on her, and so proper and particular to her.

2. It orders and moderates his love so that it turns not into sinful lust, by which that estate (which in itself, by virtue of God's ordinance, is holy) is made dirty.

Lightness

Against this purity is not only adultery, but also immorality, lewdness, and uncleanness with his wife. For many husbands without self-discipline or purity, giving the reins⁹⁸ to their uncontrolled lusts, show as much indecency and plain filthiness in their words, gestures, and actions (to say nothing of their thoughts, which are not seen) to their wives, as others do to prostitutes and harlots. This is a most shameless thing, and I am even ashamed to mention, but because it is mentioned, let such know that they shall be accounted among such "whoremongers⁹⁹ and adulterers as God will judge" (Heb 13:4).

Loving more than one's self

The *quantity* of Christ's love cannot be expressed, for the measure of it was above measure. Christ "gave himself" for the church (Eph 5:25), and in that respect He calls Himself that Good Shepherd that gave His life for His sheep (Joh 10:11). "Greater love hath no man than this" (Joh 15:13). What will He not do for His spouse that gave His life for her?

This may seem to be too high a stretch and level of love for a husband to attain to—a matter in which he is to leave his pattern and not to follow Christ. But John writes that

⁹⁸ **giving the reins** – letting go of the reins of a horse, an image of letting something run as it pleases.

⁹⁹ **whoremongers** – people guilty of the sin of sexual immorality.

the love of our brethren should reach even this degree: “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1Jo 3:16); therefore, by just consequence, for our wives.

But that this degree of love is not stretched too far, and husbands cast into a pit of unnecessary danger, two cautions must be noted. First, there must be an absolute necessity to bring us to this difficult demand of parting with our life, which is, when the good we aim at in the behalf of our wives cannot any other way be brought to pass but by risking our life. There was no other way to redeem the church but by the blood of Christ. Secondly, that the good we intend in this case to our wives be of greater value than our temporal life, as is the good of saving her soul. Thus, the apostle says, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you” (2Co 12:15). This attitude men must carry much more towards their wives. It was for our salvation that Christ gave Himself.

Unkindness

Those unkind who prefer every little thing of their own before the good of their wives work contrary to this. Their profit, their pleasure, their promotion, completely draw away their hearts and affections from their wives. If any extraordinary responsibility must be laid out or labors taken for their wives’ good, little love will then appear, by which it appears that there was no true and sound love settled in their hearts towards their wives. As gold and other similar metals are tested by the fire, so love by afflictions and crosses.

Fighting for her honor

The other extreme is the too bold and rash show of manhood of such husbands that, upon every jealous suspicion and small report, are ready to challenge someone to a fight and to enter into single combat and duels, for maintaining their wife’s honor. This being no authorized course of righting a wrong, no honor can return to the wife by it, but much dishonor and danger to the husband. If he prevails over his adversary and kills him, he is made guilty of murder, and so disgrace and shame must come to himself, his wife, and his whole family. If he is overcome and slain, she may be counted guiltier than she was before. Often it happens that God in just judgment gives over the challenger into his adversary’s hand because he has undertaken such a poorly chosen course.

Perseverance in love

The *duration* of Christ’s love was without end, “Having loved his own...he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1). His love was constant, not by fits and starts, now loving then hating; and [it was] everlasting (Hos 2:19), never regretting it, never changing or altering His mind. No provocations, no transgressions could ever make Him forget to love and cease to do the good that He intended for His church. Note what He said to her even when she turned away from Him, “Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me” (Jer 3:1); and again, “My mercy shall not depart away” (2Sa 7:15).

His love is based not on what His church deserves, but on the unchangeableness of His own will. As this manifested Christ’s love to be true, sound love, so it made it profit-

able and beneficial to the church, which is glorified by virtue of this, despite her many frailties.

This last branch must be added to all the former branches of a husband's love, or else they all will be in vain and to no purpose. This gives the truest test of sound love. Such was the love between David and Jonathan, the soundest love that ever was between parties. This brings the greatest glory to the party that loves and the greatest benefit to the party that is loved. That a man's love may thus remain firm and sacred,

1. He must be sure to lay a good foundation. He must ground his love on God's ordinance and love his wife regarding the matrimonial bond that knits them together and the close union that arises from it, and so it will last so long as that knot lasts.

2. He must further support and strengthen his love with a sacred resolution not to allow provocation to change and alter it, but rather to pass by all weaknesses—working in love to fix them if he possibly can; and if not, to bear with them.

Husbands' fickleness

Against this is their fickleness, whose love is ready to turn as a weather vane with every blast of a contrary wind, now tender-hearted, then again hard-hearted; now smiling, then pouting; now giving this and that favor, then denying everything, even such things as are needed.

Many whose love was as hot as fire while their wives were young or their friends lived, or while they pleased them, when those causes are taken away, prove in their love as cold as ice. Again others, after some time in doing good to their wives, think it a burden; and, growing weary, completely leave their former good course—which plainly shows that they never truly and entirely loved their wives.

By this pattern of Christ proposed to husbands, we have on the one side a good direction to teach us how to love our wives, as has been particularly declared; and on the other side, a matter of humiliation in that it shows us how far short we come of our binding duty. However, wives may most complain of their burden of submission to which by nature we all hate to yield, yet I am sure the heaviest burden (to love unselfishly) is laid upon the husband's shoulders; it is much easier to perform the part of a good wife than of a good husband.

A Pattern for Loving: Husbands' Love to Themselves

To the example of Christ, the apostle adds the pattern of one's self in these words, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies" (Eph 5:28).

Question: Is not the former pattern sufficient? Is this latter more excellent, more perfect?

Answer: Christ's example is a full, complete, perfect, and all-sufficient pattern, far more excellent than of a man's self. This is not attached to add anything to that, or regarding the excellence, but only because of our slowness—to make the point somewhat more plain and clear, for this pattern is more tangible and more easily discerned. Everyone knows how he loves his own body, but few or none know how Christ loves His

church. Besides, that example of Christ may seem too high and excellent for any to attain to, even beyond imitation; therefore, to show that he requires no more than a man may perform, if he will set himself with care and conscience to do his duty, [the apostle] adds the pattern of one's self. That which one does to his body if he will, he may do to his wife.

No direction can be taken from this latter pattern, but might be referred to the former, as most of the former example (though in a far lesser manner) may be referred to the latter. For the love that a man bears to himself is true and entire, without any hypocrisy. The most hypocritical wretch in the world (who in his dealings with other men does nothing uprightly) will not nor cannot play the hypocrite with himself; though other men shall never know the depth of his heart, yet the spirit which is in him, even himself, knows it (1Co 2:11).¹⁰⁰

This pattern also presses truth and sincerity on husbands in their affection towards their wives. Of all others, they may not conceal and be two-faced with them, but let them know their complete affection towards them, and see they neither merely seek their favor, nor flatter them. They who pretend great love to their wives in show only, sin against nature itself. As the love of a man's own self is in its manner complete and true, so also it is free, not forced, and, for measure, as great as it possibly can be, and, for perseverance, constant, and so, similar to Christ's love.

But there are two points especially to be considered in the love of one's self, which above others are most plainly discerned in this pattern: tenderness and cheerfulness.

No other man will or can so tenderly handle a man's hand, arm, leg, or any other part of his body, as himself. He is very aware of his own pain.

The metaphors that the apostle uses in these words, he "nourisheth and cherisheth it," vividly set forth this tenderness (Eph 5:29); for they are taken from fowls and birds that very cautiously and tenderly hover over their young ones, covering them with their wings and feathers, but so bearing up their bodies as no weight lies upon them.

Thus ought husbands, with all tenderness and gentleness, deal with their wives, as we have before noted in many particulars. Only this example of a man's self I thought good to set before husbands as a vivid pattern in which they might behold an example without exception going before them, and by which they might receive excellent direction for the better performing of the particulars before noted.

Again, no friend, no parent, no other party will or can so willingly and cheerfully do any kindness for one, as a man for himself. This among other is one especial point that the Law aims at when it enjoins a man to love his neighbor as himself, namely, as willingly and eagerly as himself (Lev 19:18). Whatever a man does for himself, he does much more cheerfully than for another. No other proof than experience is needed. Let men take notice of their own mind and disposition when they do things for themselves, and this will be as clear as the light when the sun shines forth at noon day. Such affection ought husbands to have to their wives. They ought more willingly and cheerfully to do

¹⁰⁰ Though self-deception is also a real danger (Jam 1:22).

anything for their wives than for parents, children, friends, or any others. Though this cheerfulness is an inward disposition of the heart, it may be manifested by a man's eagerness and readiness to do his wife good, when his wife shall no sooner desire a kindness than he will be ready to grant it. Boaz says to Ruth, "I will do to thee all that thou requirest" (Ruth 3:11). If by any means he may know that this or that will benefit her, though she desire¹⁰¹ it not, yet to make it happen for her, this was the mindset of Boaz to Ruth.

Contrary is the disposition of those husbands who so resentfully and unhappily do those things which they do for their wives, so that their wives would prefer they were not done at all. The manner of doing them causes more grief to tender-hearted wives than the things themselves can do good.

Thus ends the manner that husbands ought to observe in performing their duties. The reasons to enforce the same remain to be handled.

Motives to Provoke Husbands to Love Their Wives

The examples of Christ and of ourselves as they are patterns for our direction are general motives to provoke and stir us up to perform all these duties after the manner required.

Motive: Christ's example in loving the church

A greater and stronger motive cannot be given than the example of Christ. Example in itself is of great force to motivate us to do anything, especially if it is the example of some great one, a man of position and fame. Who is greater than Christ? What more worthy pattern is there? If the example of the church be of great force to move wives to be subject to their husbands, the example of Christ must be of much greater force to move husbands to love their wives. It is a great honor to be similar to Christ, and His example is a perfect pattern.

There are two things in Christ's example that are especially to be noticed to move husbands to love their wives: both the *great inequality that is between Him and His spouse*, and the *small benefit that He reaps by loving her*.

To better discern that *inequality*, the greatness of Christ on the one side and the lowness of the church on the other are duly to be weighed. Christ's greatness is set forth in Scripture by comparing Him with creatures and the Creator. Compared with creatures, He is far more excellent than the most excellent, as the apostle by many arguments proves in the first chapter of Hebrews; that whole chapter is spent in proof of this point. In another place, it is said that He is set "far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph 1:21).

Compared with the Creator, He is not subordinate to Him, but *equal* (Phi 2:6). He is "the brightness of glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb 1:3), and that Word

¹⁰¹ **desire** – request.

of Whom it is said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made by him” (Joh 1:1, 3). So He is the very Creator Himself: eternal, infinite, incomprehensible.¹⁰² Thus is Christ’s greatness beyond our understanding.

The *lowness* of the church is as low on the other side. She is a creature, fashioned out of the earth, proceeding from the loins of corrupt Adam, not only finite, but in herself of low and little value. The prophet Ezekiel sets her forth in vivid colors as she is in herself (Eze 16:1-6). Compared therefore to Christ she is “nothing,” “less than nothing” (Isa 40:17). What equality, what proportion, can there then be between Christ and her?

But if man and woman be compared together, we shall find a close equality, both in the points of their humiliation and also of their exaltation. Regarding the former, they are both of the same mold, of the same corrupt nature, subject to the same weaknesses, at length brought to the same end. Regarding the latter, the best and greatest privileges are common to both of them. They are both made after the same image, redeemed by the same price, partakers of the same grace, and heirs together of the same inheritance.

Question: What is then the higher rank of the male kind? What is the excellence of a husband?

Answer: Only outward and momentary. Outward, in the things of this world only, for in Christ Jesus they are both one (Gal 3:28). Momentary, for the time of this life only, for “in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Mat 22:30)—then all submission of wives to husbands ceases.

To conclude this point, the inequality between Christ and the church and equality between husband and wife being such as has been declared, seeing Christ grants love to His church, should not man by this be moved to love his wife?

The other point concerning the *small benefit* that Christ reaps by His church will yet further enforce the point. To illustrate this, we will notice the great benefit that man reaps by his wife.

The benefit that Christ reaps from the church is in one word: *nothing*, for Christ is in Himself *all-sufficient*. He neither needs anything nor can receive anything. “If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receiveth he of thine hand?” (Job 35:7). Yet, abundantly He gives all kinds of gifts: temporal and spiritual, earthly and heavenly. It was not therefore His own good that He considered in loving the church, but her good, for He being God became man (1Ti 3:16). Being Lord of heaven and earth, He took upon Himself the form of a servant (Phi 2:6-7). Being rich He became poor (2Co 8:9). Having the keys of hell and of death (Rev 1:18), and being the Lord of life (Act 3:15), “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto the death” (Phi 2:8). Thus, to show love to His church, He left much for her sake, but received nothing from her.

But the benefit that man reaps from a wife is very great, for “it is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18). “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing” (Pro

¹⁰² **incomprehensible** – unable to be contained within limits.

18:22)—and that in all the points of goodness:¹⁰³ a profitable thing, a comfortable thing, a delightful thing. They do [not] know the benefit of the married state who prefer single life above it—especially if the married state is ordered by God’s Word, and husband and wife are careful to perform their own duty each to other.

To apply this point also and to bring it to conclusion: if Christ, Who can receive nothing from the church, still loves her, should not men much more love their wives, who in many ways receive much good from them, and without whom they cannot be well?

This example of Christ is to be noticed because it completely wipes away all those false colors and vain pretenses that many assert as reasons to show that there is little reason they should love their wives. Some of their claims are these:

1. Their wives are of a far lower rank than themselves. Should they perform duty to their subordinates? Commonly, they who marry their kitchen maids or others far under their degree, assert this claim.

Answer: I might reply that marriage advances a wife to the degree of her husband and that it was his own folly to marry one so low. But for the purpose and point in hand, let any tell me whether the supposed difference between them and their wives is in any degree comparable to that which is between Christ and the church. Yet Christ thinks it not much to do duties of love to His church.

2. There is nothing in their wives worthy to be loved.

Answer: The simple fact that she is your wife is cause enough to make her worthy of love. But what was there in the church to make her worthy of Christ’s love? If it be said that she is endued with many excellent graces which make her lovely in Christ’s sight, I answer, that of herself she has none of those graces; Christ has given them to her and so made her lovely, and thus should you work by using all good means you can to make your wife match your love, but in any case to love her.

3. Their wives give good reason to be hated by reason of their irritability, stubbornness, pride, and other intolerable vices.

Answer: There is no good reason to move a husband to hate his wife, nor any vice that should seem intolerable to him. With goodness he ought to overcome evil (Rom 12:21). If scandalous sins seemed intolerable to Christ, or if He thought there was a good reason to cause hatred, many that are of His church would often draw His hatred upon them, but Christ never hates a member of His church.

4. There is no hope that I shall ever receive any help of my wife or benefit from her.

Answer: There is little love in those who can conceive no hope, for love “hopeth all things” (1Co 13:7). Yet this is the case with Christ. The church is so utterly unable to help or benefit Him that He may justly say He cannot hope to receive anything from her. Christ loves the church for her own good, not for His—so ought husbands. Thus, if Christ’s example be well weighed and observed by husbands, it will give matter enough to remove every doubt or objection raised to alienate their affections from their wives.

¹⁰³ A godly wife is a precious and good gift from God. Yet let not the reader forget 1 Corinthians 7:28.

Wisely therefore has the apostle set it before husbands, both to direct them how to love their wives and also to move them so to do.

Motive: A man's love to himself

To the same purpose that Christ's example tends, tends also the pattern of a man's self. Great is the affection that a man bears to himself, to his own flesh, his own body. He never hates, but ever loves himself. No sore, no disease, no pain, no stench that the flesh brings to a man can make him hate it, but rather all manner of weaknesses do make him the more to pity, treat it tenderly, and cherish it. This is a work of nature; the most pagan barbarians that ever were do it. Now a wife, being to a man as his body and his flesh, and God having commanded men to love their wives as their own bodies, these conclusions will necessarily follow from this motive:

1. He that does not love his wife is more carried with the instinct of nature than with the plain command of the God of nature. Nature's instinct moves him to love his body. But God's plain command does not [in his case] move him to love his wife.

2. He that does not love his wife is worse than an unbeliever and a barbarian, even than a very beast; for all these love their own bodies and their own flesh, but a wife (by God's ordinance) is as one's body and flesh.

3. He that loves his wife loves himself. The apostle himself in these very words lays down this conclusion (Eph 5:28), from which by the rule of contraries this also will follow: he that does not love his wife, does not love himself.

4. He that does not love his wife cannot avoid bringing sadness and trouble upon himself. For the damage and trouble that results upon a wife through any neglect of duty on her husband's part, comes also on him, since the trouble that results on the body through any negligence of the head, comes also on the head.

If these are not sufficient motives to motivate a husband to love his wife, I do not know what can be sufficient.



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