

Female Piety

The Young Woman's Friend and Guide
through Life to Immortality

John Angell James
edited by his son



Soli Deo Gloria Publications
. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .

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Foreword to the 20th Century Edition of

Female Piety

by John Angell James

Whenever I read the Puritans, I am reminded of that statement of Francis Bacon: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."

This book deserves to be chewed and digested. The author is practical. He is sensitive. He is informational.

Take for example his practical ability. In his chapter on "The Young Mother," he stresses that emphasis should be placed on rearing the first child right. "If a mother begins well, she is likely to continue well...her conduct towards the first child is likely, of course, to determine her conduct with respect to all the following ones." The first child, undisciplined, makes the others fall over like dominoes.

And how practical is his admonition on discipline: "Do not make them learn Scripture as a punishment for offenses, and thus convert religion, which is the foretaste of heaven, into penances." And then he adds, "Especially do not make the Sabbath a day of gloom instead of gladness."

He would, no doubt, approve of a friend of mine who would let her children eat candy *only* on Sabbath!

The author is sensitive. In his description of

Jesus dealing with Mary and Martha on the death of their brother, he focuses on how differently Christ deals with the personalities of the two sisters: "Martha's distress was of such a nature that it admitted of discussion and discourse. Jesus accordingly spoke to her, and led her to speak to him as suited her circumstances, some of the sublimest communications touching the resurrection of the body and the life of the soul. While to Mary, who is wrapped in such deep grief, he shows his sympathy in a different way...Jesus wept." We see the "Son of God in tears."

He is informational. His first chapter abounds in data of how much feminists owe to the Gospel. "It is enough to demand her thankfulness that in common with man she is the object of Divine love, redeeming mercy, and the subject of immortal hope; but in addition to this, she is rescued from oppression and exalted to honour in this present world." He points out the Bible is a friend of women in both worlds: "How then shall woman discharge her obligations? In two ways. First in yielding up her heart and life to the influence and service of her Benefactor, in faith, in holiness, and in love. Female piety is the best, the only sincere expression of female gratitude to God. An irreligious woman is also an ungrateful one."

And also she ought to be very energetic in missionary enterprises, anxious to give to others what she has received. As a child growing up in India of missionary parents, I can still see the awe on the women's faces as my mother would share with them the surprising good news, the Gospel is not for men only!

The author is very up to date on his reason for writing the book. He writes, "Can any good and valid reason be assigned for shutting out from the house of God instructions to so important a class of the community? Many persons almost instinctively shrink from such addresses, from a fear lest matters should be introduced at which modesty would blush and by which the finer sensitivities would be wounded. There is a prudishness in such feelings which can be justified neither by reason nor revelation."

Our author writes of women: "She not only renders smooth or rough our path to the grave, but helps or hinders our progress to immortality." To crib, with a minor alteration, a line from the quotable G.K. Chesterton, I would say, "Forward to the nineteenth century!"

Edna Gerstner
Ligonier, PA
May 1994

CHAPTER I.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE CONDITION OF WOMAN.

GALATIANS iii, 28.

There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

WOMAN was the finishing grace of the creation. Woman was the completeness of man's bliss in Paradise. Woman was the cause of sin and death to our world. The world was redeemed by the seed of the woman. Woman is the mother of the human race; our companion, counsellor, and comforter in the pilgrimage of life; or our tempter, scourge, and destroyer. Our sweetest cup of earthly happiness, or our bitterest draught of sorrow, is mixed and administered by her hand. She not only renders smooth or rough our path to the grave, but helps or hinders our progress to immortality. In heaven we shall bless God for her aid in assisting us to reach that blissful state; or amidst the torments of unutterable woe in another region, we shall deplore the fatality of her influence.

This work was delivered originally in a course of

monthly sermons, to which I was led by a conviction that woman, as regards her specific duties, is too much neglected in the ministrations of the sanctuary; an omission which must be traced to a morbid delicacy unworthy of the pulpit. Happily this reproach does not appertain to the press, to which perhaps, in the opinion of some, this subject ought to be exclusively consigned. But why? Can any good and valid reason be assigned for shutting out from the house of God instructions to so important a class of the community? Many persons almost instinctively shrink from such addresses, from a fear lest matters should be introduced at which modesty would blush, and by which the finer sensibilities would be wounded. There is a prudishness in such feelings which can be justified neither by reason nor revelation.

It may be as well to announce in the opening chapter that the whole course will be of a decidedly religious nature. For all the general directions and excellences of female character, I shall refer to the various works which on these topics have issued from the press. My subject is religion, my object is the soul, my aim is salvation. I view you, my female friends, as destined to another world, and it is my business to aid and stimulate you, "by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality," and to obtain eternal life. I look beyond the painted and gaudy scene of earth's fading vanities, to the everlasting ages through which you must exist in torment or bliss; and, God helping me, it shall not be my fault if you do not live in comfort, die in peace, and inherit salvation.

I can think of no subject with which more appro-

priately to commence this work, than the influence of Christianity on the condition of woman.

Our first attention must be directed of course to the condition of the sex beyond the boundaries of Christendom.

It would seem from the words of the original denouncement upon Eve for her transgression in eating the forbidden fruit, that while yet the first pair were innocent, there was a more entire equality of condition and rights between the sexes than there has been after the fall. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." This sounds like something penal, though perhaps some would regard it as merely predictive, and intended to describe the cruel and brutalising tendency of sin, in turning man, who ought to be the loving companion of his wife, into a tyrant. How fearfully, if predictive, this sentence has been fulfilled, the degradation of woman, her wrongs, her sorrows, and her vices, in many cases, most painfully attest.

History, which will ever be found to corroborate revelation, proves that in most Pagan and Mohammedan nations, whether ancient or modern, woman has been cruelly and wickedly sunk below her proper level in social and domestic life, "hated and despised from her birth, and her birth itself esteemed a calamity ; in some countries not even allowed the rank of a moral and responsible agent ; so tenderly alive to her own degradation that she acquiesces in the murder of her female offspring ; immured from infancy ; without education ; married without her consent ; in a multitude of instances sold by her parents ; refused the confidence of her

husband, and banished from his table ; on his death, doomed to the funeral pile, or to contempt that renders life a burden." In such a condition she has been the household drudge, or the mere object of passion. She has ministered to the gratification of man's indolence or appetite, but has not been his companion, his counsellor, or his comforter. In barbarous countries she has been a slave ; in civilised ones very generally little better than a kept mistress. Her mind has been left untaught, as if incapable or unworthy of instruction. She has been not only imprisoned in seclusion by jealousy, but degraded and rendered vicious and miserable by polygamy. Sometimes worshipped as a goddess ; next foudled as a toy ; then punished as a victim, she could never attain to dignity, and even with all her brightest charms could rarely appear but as a doll or a puppet.

Exceptions to some extent may be made in favour of the polished Greeks and proud Romans : but only to some extent ; for did time permit, and necessity require, it could be shewn that neither Athenian refinement nor Roman virtue gave to woman her just rank by the side of her husband, or her proper place in his affection, esteem, and confidence. The laws of Rome, it is true, secured to her greater liberty and consideration than she had before received ; but still she was so treated even there as to sink into degradation disgraceful to her purity and destructive to her happiness. "No happy influence did she exert on the public or private welfare of the state. Politicians intrigued by her instrumentality ; ambition combined with passion to corrupt her ; and her liberty degenerated into licentiousness. Through her influence the streets of the capital were

sometimes deluged with its best blood : and to such an extent was her profligacy carried, that among the decrees against the licentiousness of female manners, enacted by the Senate during the reign of Tiberius, was one, ‘that no woman whose grandfather, father, or husband was a Roman knight, should be allowed to make her person venal.’ The laws of a nation are an instructive and faithful history of its manners. If such was the condition of a Roman lady, what must have been that of the subordinate classes? Neither Paganism nor Mohammedanism ever yet understood the female character, or conceded woman’s just claims. In many nations the degradation has been excessive. You remember probably the reply of a Pagan mother, who having been expostulated with for the murder of her female child, contended that she had performed an act of mercy in sparing the babe the miseries of a woman’s life. All travellers and all missionaries attest the fact of woman’s humiliation, beyond the boundaries of revelation.”*

If we go to the Bible, we shall learn that it is to Christianity, as contrasted even with Judaism, that woman owes her true elevation. Polygamy is, and ever must be, fatal to female dignity and happiness : this, or at any rate concubinage, was practised, no doubt under mistaken views, by the patriarchs ; not that it was ever positively sanctioned by God, for from the beginning he made one woman for one man, and by the providential and remarkable fact of the general equality of the sexes

* The reader is referred for detailed statements of the condition of woman in Pagan and Mohanmedan countries to a very able and interesting work by my late friend Dr. Cox, of Hackney, entitled, “Female Scripture Biography, with an Essay on what Christianity has done for Woman.”

as to numbers, he still proclaims in unmistakable language the law of monogamy, but to use an expression of the apostle, "he winked at" these things: he did not regard it as innocent or convenient, yet he did not say much about it, or punish it, but left it to punish itself, which it most certainly did. If we examine the Levitical code we shall find that even it, though a Divine dispensation, contained some regulations which evinced that the time of woman's full emancipation from a state of inferiority had not yet arrived: and that it was reserved for the glorious and gracious economy under which we are placed, to raise the female sex to its just position and influence in society. Christianity as in other things, so in this, is an enlargement of human privileges; and among other blessings which it confers, is its elevation of woman to her proper place and influence in the family and in society.

Let us now consider what there is in Christianity that tends to elevate and improve the condition of woman.

To the oppressive and cruel customs of Mohammedanism and Paganism, in their treatment of the female sex, Christianity presents a beautiful and lovely contrast; while to the partial provisions for female rights in Judaism it adds a complete recognition of their claims. It is the glory of our holy religion, and a proof of its emanation from the Divine beneficence, that it is the enemy of oppression in every form and every condition, and gives to every one his due. It tramples on no right, it resents and resists all wrong: but no one of all the sons of men is so indebted to its merciful and equitable reign as woman. From Christianity woman

has derived her moral and social influence : yea, almost her very existence as a social being. The mind of woman, which many of the philosophers, legislators, and sages of antiquity doomed to inferiority and imbecility, Christianity has developed. The gospel of Christ in the person of its Divine Founder, has descended into this neglected mine, which even wise men had regarded as not worth the working, and brought up many a priceless gem, flashing with the light of intelligence, and glowing with the lovely hues of Christian graces. Christianity has been the restorer of woman's plundered rights, and has furnished the brightest jewels in her present crown of honour. Her previous degradation accounts, in part at least, for the instability of early civilisation. It is impossible for society to be permanently elevated where woman is debased and servile. Wherever females are regarded as inferior beings, society contains within itself the elements of dissolution, and the obstruction of all solid improvement. It is impossible that institutions and usages which oppose and stifle the instincts of our nature, and violate the revealed law of God, can be crowned with ultimate success. Society may change in its external aspect ; may exhibit the glitter of wealth, the refinements of taste, the embellishments of art, or the more valuable attainments of science and literature ; but if the mind of woman remain undeveloped, her taste uncultivated, and her person enslaved, the social foundations are insecure and the cement of society is weak. Wherever Christianity is understood and felt, woman is free. The gospel, like a kind angel, opens her prison doors and bids her walk abroad and enjoy the sunlight of reason, and breathe the invigorating air of intellectual

freedom. And in proportion as pure Christianity prevails this will be ever found to be the case.

But all this is vague and general assertion, and I will bring forward proofs of it.

Christianity elevates the condition of woman by its genius as a system of universal equity and benevolence. When it descended from heaven to earth, it was heralded into our world by the angel's song, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace and good will to man." The offspring of infinite love, it partakes of the spirit, and reflects the character, of its Divine Parent. It is essentially and unalterably the enemy of all injustice, cruelty, and oppression: and the friend of all that is just, kind and courteous. The rough, the brutal, and the ferocious, are alien from its spirit; while the tender, the gentle, and the courteous, are entirely in unison with its nature. It frowns with indignant countenance upon tyranny, whether in the palace or the parlour, while it is the friend of liberty, and the patron of right. The man who understands its genius, and lives under its inspiration, whether he be a monarch, a master, a husband, or a father, must be a man of equity and love. Christianity inspires the purest chivalry; a chivalry shorn of vanity, purified from passion, elevated above frivolity; a chivalry of which the animating principle is love to God, and the scene of its operation the domestic circle, and not the public pageant. He who is unjust or unkind to any one, especially to the weaker sex, betrays a total ignorance of, or a manifest repugnance to, the practical influence of the gospel of Christ. It is a mistake to suppose that the faith of Jesus is intended only to throw a dim religious light over the gloom of the cloister, or to form the character of the devotee; on the contrary,

it is pre-eminently a social thing, and is designed as well as adapted to form a character which shall go out into the world in a spirit of universal benevolence : to such a character the oppressor or degrader of woman can make no pretensions.

The incarnation of Christ tended to exalt the dignity of the female sex. His assuming humanity has given a dignity to our nature which it had never received before, and could not have received in any other way. Christ is "the Pattern Man" of our race, in whom all the lines of humanity converge and unite, so far as the existence of our race goes. When he took man's nature, he vouchsafed to ally himself to all the members of the extended series by the actual adoption of a transmitted being, which gave him relationship to them. He not only became like men and dwelt among them, but he became man himself, an actual descendant from their first progenitor. He was made man. Human nature became more precious. By the manner of his birth, he associated himself with our nature. This appears to be the meaning of the apostle in his quotation of the eighth Psalm in the epistle to the Hebrews, to show the dignity conferred upon humanity, by its being assumed by so glorious a person, as our Lord Jesus Christ in his divine nature was. If, then, manhood is honoured by Christ assuming it, how much more is woman exalted, who, in addition to this, was made the instrument of giving birth to the humanity of Christ? It is emphatically said by the apostle, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." In the person of the Virgin Mary, and by her giving birth to the holy being born of her, the sex was elevated. True, it was a personal distinc-

tion, that she should be the mother of our Lord's humanity: and (while she has been by the apostate Church of Rome wickedly exalted into an object of idolatrous homage) all generations justly call her blessed. Yet the honour is not limited to herself, but passes over to her sex, which she represented; and it is to this the apostles allude. He does not mention her, but dwells upon the abstract general term, "made of a woman." Every female on earth, from that day to this, has had a relative elevation, by and in that wonderful transaction. Woman was not the mother of God, as the Papists absurdly, and, as I think, blasphemously, say; but she was the mother of that humanity which was mysteriously united with Divinity. And does not this great fact proclaim, "Let the sex which alone was concerned in giving birth to the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, be ever held in high estimation."

The personal conduct of our Lord during his sojourn upon earth tended to exalt the female sex to a consideration before unknown. Follow him through the whole of his earthly career, and mark the attention which he most condescendingly paid to, and as condescendingly received from, the female sex. He admitted them to his presence, conversed familiarly with them, and accepted the tokens of their gratitude, affection, and devotedness. See him accompanying his mother to the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee. See him conversing with the woman of Samaria, instructing her ignorance, enduring her petulance, correcting her mistakes, awakening her conscience, converting her soul, and afterwards employing her as a messenger of mercy and salvation to her neighbours. See him rebuking his disciples for discouraging the approach of mothers and their infants.

See him compassionating the widow of Nain, and restoring her son to life. See him in the little family of Bethany, blending his sympathies with the bereaved sisters ; and on another occasion entering into familiar conversation with this same Martha and Mary, and faithfully rebuking one and kindly commending the other. See him receiving the offerings of those women who ministered to him of their substance. Witness the attendance of pious women upon him in the last scenes of his life. It was to Mary Magdalene that the honour of the first manifestation of the risen Saviour was made ; and thus a woman was preferred to apostles, and made the messenger of the blissful news to them. “The frequent mention,” says Doddridge, “which is made in the evangelists of the generous courage and zeal of pious women in the service of Christ, and especially of the faithful and resolute constancy with which they attended him in those last scenes of his suffering, might very possibly be intended to obviate that haughty and senseless contempt which the pride of men, often irritated by those vexations to which their own irregular passions have exposed them, has in all ages affected to throw on that sex, which probably in the sight of God has constituted by far the better half of mankind ; and to whose care and tenderness the wisest and best of men generally owe and ascribe much of the daily comfort and enjoyments of their lives.” Compare this behaviour towards the sex, this chaste, holy, dignified conduct of our Lord, with the polygamy, licentiousness, and impurities of Mohammed, not merely as evidence of their respective claims, but as regards their influence upon the condition of woman : while the one did everything by example and by precept to corrupt, to debase, and to degrade

them, the other did everything to purify, to elevate, and to bless them. The conduct of the Arabian enthusiast and impostor, and the boasts of his followers and admirers in respect of him, are too revolting for description, almost for allusion. But on the contrary, what one syllable of the Saviour's utterances, or what one scene of his life, was there, which tainted the immaculate purity of his language, or left the slightest stain upon the more than snow-like sanctity of his character? What part of his conduct might not be unveiled and described before a company of the most modest, most delicate, and even most prudish-minded females in existence? But his treatment of woman raised her from her degradation without exalting her above her level. He rescued her from oppression without exciting her vanity; and invested her with dignity without giving her occasion for pride. While he allowed her not only to come into his presence, but to minister to his comfort; and while he conciliated her grateful and reverent affection, he inspired her with awe; and thus taught man how to behave to woman, and what return woman was to make to man. The conduct of Jesus Christ towards the female sex was one of the most attractive excellences of his beautiful character, though perhaps it is one of the least noticed. To him they must ever point, as not only the Saviour of their souls, but as the advocate of their rights and the guardian of their peace.

The actual abolition of polygamy by Christianity is a vast improvement in the condition of woman. Wherever polygamy prevails, the female sex must ever be in a state of degradation and misery. "Experience has abundantly and painfully proved that polygamy debases and brutalises both the body and the soul, and renders

society incapable of those generous and refined affections, which, if duly cultivated, would be found to be the inheritance even of our fallen nature." Where is there an instance in which polygamy has not been the source of many and bitter calamities in the domestic circle and in the State? Where has it reared a virtuous and heaven-taught progeny? Where has it been distinguished for any of the moral virtues, or rather where has it not been distinguished for the most fearful degeneracy of manners? By this practice, which has prevailed so extensively through nearly all countries and all ages in which Christianity has not been known or has not been paramount, marriage loses all its tenderness, its sanctity, and its reciprocal confidence; the cup of connubial felicity is exchanged for that of mere animal pleasure; woman panders to the appetite of man, instead of ministering to his comfort, and the home assumes much of the character of a brothel. There may be several mistresses, but there can be only one wife; and though there may be many mothers, they are without a mother's affection; presenting a scene of endless envy and jealousy, before which domestic comfort must ever retire, leaving mere sensual gratification. No stimulus to improvement, no motive to fidelity, no ambition to please, can be felt by a wife who may be supplanted the next month by a new favourite. And in such circumstances there is no room and little occasion for the display of those virtues which constitute female honour. Here, then, is the glorious excellence of Christianity; it revived and re-established the original institute of marriage, and restored to woman her fortune, her person, her rank, and her happiness, of all of which she had been cheated by polygamy; and it thus raised

the female sex to the elevation to which they were destined by their wise and beneficent Creator. True it is that Christianity has not effected this great change, so beneficial not only to the sex, but to society, by direct, explicit, and positive precept ; yet it has done so by an implication so clear that there can be no mistake as to the reality of the command, or the universality of its obligation, for all its provisions, precepts, and promises, proceed on the supposition of each husband being the husband but of one wife. And the springs of national prosperity rise from beneath the family hearth, and the domestic constitution is the mould where national character is cast, and that mould must of necessity take its form from the unity, sanctity, and inviolability of marriage.

The jealousy with which Christianity guards the sanctity of the marriage tie must ever be regarded as having a most favourable influence upon the condition of woman. Let this be relaxed or impaired, and that moment woman sinks in dignity, in purity, and in happiness. There have been nations in which the facility of divorce took the place of polygamy, and of course was accompanied with some of its vices, and many of its miseries too. This was eminently the case with ancient Rome after the early times of the Republic, and most instructive are the examples in the annals of its history, and the allusions to them in the pages of its poets. Let the nuptial tie be weakened, and the wife live in perpetual fear, because her union to her husband is placed in jeopardy by a law under which he may at any time, at the instigation of passion or caprice, dissolve the bond between them, and without either penalty, remorse, or shame, dismiss her from his home, and there is an end

to her peace, and perhaps to her purity. For it is to be recollected that it is she who has most to dread from the licence of divorce. She is likely to be the victim of such a liberty. With what devout and reverential gratitude should she then turn to that Divine Teacher who has interposed his authority to strengthen the marriage bond, and to guard it from being severed at the demand of illicit passion, or the dictates of humour or caprice. How should she rejoice to hear Him say, "Whoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her that is put away, doth commit adultery." The indulgence of greater latitude and liberty in this matter granted to the Jews was thus superseded by Christianity; a greater security was provided for woman's honour and felicity; and a broader basis laid for domestic harmony and happiness. If it were only for this, Christianity deserves the gratitude of mankind. But it is only half its glory that it has abolished the custom of having many wives: its crowning achievement is that it has protected the rights, the dignity, and the comfort of the one wife. It has shut out intruders from her home, and guaranteed the safe and permanent possession of it to herself.

I may surely mention the equal participation of religious blessing to which women are admitted by the Christian religion. How explicitly and how firmly has the apostle claimed for woman all the blessings obtained by Christ for the human race, where he says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." There is the charter granting to woman all the blessings of salvation; there is the proof of

woman's equality in the sight of God ; there is woman's claim to her just rank in the institutes of man. There is not a blessing necessary to eternal life, which she does not receive in the same measure and in the same manner as the other sex. There is a popular tradition among the Mohammedans, prevalent among them to this day, that women are not permitted to enter paradise : the houris of that region being specially created in their stead. What degradation is there in such an idea ! But it is consistent with the spirit, and harmonises with the genius, of Mohammedanism, which regards woman more as the slave of man's passions, than as the companion of his life. Christianity places the wife by the side of the husband ; the daughter by the side of the father ; the sister by the side of the brother ; and the maid by the side of the mistress, at the altar of the family ; in the meeting of the church ; at the table of the Lord ; and in the congregation of the sanctuary. Male and female meet together at the cross, and will meet in the realms of glory. Can anything more effectually tend to raise and sustain the condition of woman than this ? God in all his ordinances, Christ in his glorious undertaking, and the Holy Spirit in his gracious work, gave her her proper place in the world, by giving her a proper place in the church. It is for her with peculiar emphasis to say, " God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places." And well have women understood their privileges, for look into our congregations and churches, and see how largely they are composed of females. How many more of their sex, than of the other, avail themselves of the offer of gospel mercy, and come under the influence of

religion. It is in the female bosom, however we may account for the fact, that piety finds a home on earth. The door of woman's heart is often thrown wide open to receive the Divine guest, when man refuses Him an entrance. And it is by thus yielding to the power of godliness, and reflecting upon others the beauties of holiness, that she maintains her standing and her influence in society. Under the sanctifying power of religion she ascends to the glory, not only of an intelligent, but of a spiritual, existence; not only gladdens by her presence the solitary hours of man's existence, and beguiles by her converse and sympathy the rough and tedious paths of his life; but in some measure modifies, purifies, and sanctifies him, by making him feel how awful goodness is.

But the finishing stroke which Christianity gives in elevating the condition of women, is, by inviting and employing their energies and influence in promoting the spread of religion in the world; and thus carrying out, through them as well as men, the great purposes of God in the redemption of the world by the mission of his Son. To them, in common with men, the apostle says, "That ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." The honour so liberally bestowed upon the pious women of antiquity, of ministering to the personal wants of the Saviour, and of being so constantly about his person, was the least of the distinctions designed for them by our holy religion. They bear an exalted place in the labours and offices enjoined and instituted in apostolic times for the setting up of Christ's Kingdom in the world. How instructive and impressive is it to hear Paul say, "Help those women which laboured with me

in the gospel." What a register of names and offices of illustrious females do we find in Romans xvi. Priscilla, his helper; "Mary, who bestowed much labour on us;" "Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord;" "Phebe, the servant of the church at Cenchrea," who was sent to the church at Rome, and entrusted with so momentous a commission as to bear to that community of Christians that epistle of the apostle, which, if we may lawfully compare one portion of Scripture with another, is the most precious portion of Divine revelation. In addition to all this, there can be but little doubt that in the primitive church, not only were women occasionally endowed by the Spirit with the miraculous gifts of prophesying, but they were also employed in the office of deaconesses. The Christian church in modern times, has gone backward in the honour put upon the female character. The primitive age of Christianity was in advance of ours, in the respect paid to the female sex by officially employing them in the services of the church, and in the wisdom which made use of their available and valuable resources. It has been said that the usages of society have somewhat changed since that time, so as to render the services of women to their own sex less necessary now than they were then, when the friendly and social intercourse of the sexes was more restricted, and females were kept in greater seclusion. Some truth, no doubt, there is in this assertion; but perhaps not so much as is imagined by some. Both general and sacred history represent women in the times referred to as mingling in the society and sharing the occupations of the other sex.

I now remark that not only does Christianity thus tend, by its own nature and provisions, to exalt the

female character, but it has accomplished this wherever it has prevailed. If we consult the pages of history, whether ancient or modern, whether eastern or western, we shall find that wherever the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ has been successful, there it has achieved the emancipation of woman from her thralldom, and rescued her from degradation. I refer to modern Europe and America in proof of this. What a contrast in this respect do those countries present to all Pagan and Mohammedan nations! Is it not a triumph and a trophy of Christianity to be able to point to the most polished nations of the globe as being, at any rate, professedly Christian; and at the same time to say, "Look at the improved condition of the female sex?" And may I not affirm that woman's emancipation and elevation are in proportion to the purity of that Christianity which has thus been diffused?

If we refer to the records of modern missions, we shall find abundant proof of what the gospel does for the elevation of the female character. It has abolished the Suttee in India, and the widow is no longer immolated on the pile which consumes her departed husband. It has stopped the drudgery of the wives of all savage tribes, the incarcerating seclusion of Mohammedan and Papal nations, the polygamy, the infanticide, and the concubinage of all countries whither it has gone. Yes, Christianity has in modern times proved itself, in all parts of the world, woman's emancipator and friend. It has brought her from under the disastrous influence of the pale crescent of the impostor of Mecca, and placed her in all the irradiating and enlivening splendour of the Sun of Righteousness. It has rescued her from the baleful power of the crucifix, and brought her

within the elevating attraction of the cross. But there is another way in which we may see that Christianity, even in this Christian and Protestant nation, has benefited and raised the condition of millions of once wretched and degraded women ; made such not by their own misconduct, but by the vices and cruelty of their husbands. How many wives have been reduced to a kind of domestic slavery by the drunkenness, infidelity, and tyranny of those who had pledged themselves to love and cherish them ? Christianity in its power has in myriads of instances laid hold of the hearts of such men, and changed them from vice to holiness : and the husband appeared as much changed as the man ; and among other evidences of the reality of the change, and the manifestations of its excellence, was his altered conduct at home, where his wife became his companion, instead of being his drudge, his slave, and his victim. Christianity has thus carried out its genius and its precepts in the actual elevation of the female character wherever it has gone. The chivalry of the middle ages which combined religion, valour, and gallantry, whimsical as the institution seems, no doubt did something to accomplish this end. I do not dispute the truth of the remark made by a French writer, quoted in a popular work entitled "Woman's Mission," where he says that women shut up in their castellated towers, civilized the warriors who despised their weakness, and rendered less barbarous the passions and the prejudices which themselves shared. It was they who directed the savage passions and brute force of the men to an unselfish aim, the defence of the weak ; and added humanity to courage, which had been the only virtue previously recognised. But even chivalry derived its

existence in some measure from religion. And after all, how inferior in its nature and how different in its influence, was that system of romance to the dignified principles and holy influence of Christianity. It did very well to figure at the joust and the tournament; in the hall of the baron, and in the circle of the fair; but its influence in the domestic scene was very slight as compared with that of the institutions of the New Testament. It was rather the exaggeration to extravagance of female rights and privileges, than an intelligent concession of them under a sense of justice, and in obedience to the Divine authority; and it may be questioned whether many an illustrious knight did not when the hour of imagination had passed away, and the ardour of passion had cooled, in the absence of Christian principles, crush and break the heart which he had been so anxious to win. It is the glory of Christianity that, instead of appealing to the imagination, the senses, and the passions, it supplies principles which are rooted in the soul, and sway the conscience; and that instead of leading its possessor to expend his admiration of woman in the exciting scenes of public amusement, it teaches and influences him first of all to contemplate her where her charms are less meretriciously adorned, in the retirement of social intercourse, and then to enjoy them within the hallowed circle of domestic life. It allows of no senseless adoration like that which chivalry promoted, and which from its very excess is likely to be followed by recoil or collapse. What Christianity does for woman is to fit her to be neither the goddess nor the slave, but the friend and companion, of man, and to teach man to consider her in this honourable and amiable aspect.

Do we not see in all this a beautiful exhibition of the transcendent excellence of our holy religion? In every view that we can take of Christianity, whether we contemplate it in its aspects towards another world or towards this; in its relations to God or society; in its sublime doctrines or its pure morality; we see a form of inimitable beauty, sufficient to captivate every heart but that which is petrified by false philosophy, avowed infidelity, or gross immorality. But never does it appear more lovely than in its relation to woman. With what equity does it hold the balance between the sexes! With what kindness does it throw its shield over the weaker vessel! With what wisdom does it sustain the rank and claims of those whose influence is so important to society, and yet so limit their claims that they shall not be carried to such a length as to defeat their end! With what nice discrimination does it fix woman's place where her power can be most advantageously employed for the cultivation of her own virtues and the benefit of society! "Behold Christianity, then, walking forth in her purity and greatness to bless the earth, diffusing her light in every direction, distributing her charities on either hand, quenching the flames of lust and the fires of ambition, silencing discord, spreading peace, and creating all things new. Angels watch her progress, celebrate her influence, and anticipate her final triumphs! The moral creation brightens beneath her smiles and owns her renovating power. At her approach man loses his fierceness, and woman her chains; each becomes blessed in the other, and God is glorified in both.*"

May we not affirm that the treatment of woman by Judaism and Christianity is one of the proofs of their

* Dr Cox's Essay.

divine origin? We have seen already how much superior the later dispensation was to the earlier one, as in other particulars, so in respect of the matter I am treating of here. But they must always be associated together. The spiritual religion of Christ was the development of the great truths prefigured in the symbols of the ceremonial religion of Moses. I have shown how both Mohammedanism and Paganism degrade the female character and sex. It would seem therefore that man left to himself would never have set up a religion which dealt equitably and kindly with them. And what has infidelity, without a religion, done for them? What would it do for them? Degrade them by demoralizing them. The patrons of impurity and licentiousness, infidels at heart, have put on the cloak of the philosopher, and maxims the most licentious have found their way into works making high pretensions to morality, and assuming the office of teachers of the age. Atheism, the most undisguised, has made its appearance, and alas, that it should boast of a priestess, entitled to distinction on other grounds, to conduct its worship at the shrine, and upon the altar, of chance! Before scepticism had reached this depth of error, and arrived at the gloomy region of a godless void, while yet it lingered on the shores of Deism, it manifested its demoralizing tendency. Hume taught that adultery, when known, was a slight offence; and when unknown, no offence at all. Bolingbroke openly and violently attacked every important truth and every serious duty; particularly he did what he could to license lewdness, and cut up chastity and decency by the roots. Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, the most serious of the early English deists, declared that the indulgence of lust is no more to be

blamed than the thirst of a fever, or the drowsiness of lethargy. Nor have modern infidels been behind their predecessors. Godwin and Owen attacked the marriage tie. And let the annals of the first French revolution, that terrible eruption from the volcano of atheism, tell by the history of Mirabeau, the type of its morals, what infidelity would do to corrupt and degrade the female sex. Woman's virtue, dignity, honour, and happiness, are nowhere safe but under the protection of the Word of God. The Bible is the ægis of the female sex. Beneath this protection they are secure in their rights, their dignity, and their peace. It is their vine and fig tree, under which in calm repose they may enjoy the shade and relish the fruit. It protects their purity from taint, and their peace from disturbance. Let woman know her friend, and her enemy too. An infidel of either sex is the foe of our species, either individually or collectively viewed; but a female infidel is the most dangerous and destructive of the furies, from whom in her suicidal career the virtuous of her own sex recoil with horror, and whom the vicious regard as the abettor, though it may be unintentionally, of their crimes. Woman! regard thy Saviour for the next world as thine Emancipator for this present one: love the Bible as the charter of thy liberty, and the guardian of thy bliss: and consider the church of Christ as thine asylum from the wrongs of oppression and the arts of seduction.

Let woman seek to discharge her obligations to Christianity. Grateful she ought to be, for immense are the favours which have been conferred upon her by it. It is enough to demand her thankfulness, that in common with man, she is the object of Divine love, redeeming mercy, and the subject of immortal hope;

but in addition to this, she is rescued from oppression and exalted to honour in the present world. In regard to this, your obligations to Christianity are immense. You owe infinitely more to it than you ever reflect upon, or than you will ever be able to cancel. Often as you look round upon your condition in society, and especially as often as you contrast your situation with that of women in Pagan countries, let a glow of gratitude warm your heart and add intensity to the fervour with which you exclaim, "Precious Bible." Yes, doubly precious to you as your friend for both worlds. How then shall woman discharge her obligations? In two ways. First, in yielding up her heart and life to the influence and service of her benefactor, in faith, holiness, and love. Female piety is the best, the only sincere expression of female gratitude to God. An irreligious woman is also an ungrateful one. She who loves not Christ, whomsoever else she may love, and however chaste and pure that love may be, is living immeasurably below her obligations, and has a stain of guilt upon her heart and her conscience, which no other virtue can efface or conceal.

Woman's obligations should also be discharged by seeking to extend to others that benign system which has exerted so beneficial an influence upon herself. Of all the supporters of our missionary schemes, whether they are formed to evangelise the heathen abroad, or reform the sinful at home, women should be, as indeed they generally are, the most zealous, liberal, and prayerful supporters. Wherever she turns her eye over the distant regions of our earth, at least wherever Paganism or Mohammedanism throw their baleful shadow (and alas, how large a portion of the earth that is!) there

she beholds her sex degraded and oppressed. From China's vast domain, from India's sunny plains, from Persia's flowery gardens, from the snows of Arctic regions, from the sterile deserts of Arabia, and beneath the burning line in Africa, woman lifts her voice amidst her wrongs, her woes, and her miseries, piteously imploring, "Come over and help us." The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, but her groans are deeper, her cries louder, than any others. Borne upon the wings of every breeze, and floated on every wave that touches our shores from those regions of sin and sorrow, comes her petition to Christian females in this country for the blessings of Christianity. Cold, thankless, and unfeeling must be that heart which is unaffected by such an appeal, and makes no effort to respond to it; which prompts to no interest in our missionary schemes, and leads to no liberality in their support. The Millennium will be especially woman's jubilee, and as no groan is deeper than hers during the reign of sin and sorrow, so no joy will be louder than hers under the reign of Christ. It belongs, therefore, to her to be most fervent in the cry of the church, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."