

Christ's Gift to Women and His Gift of Women to the Human Race.

[Address at Baptist W. M. U. Training School Commencement,
Louisville, Ky., May 8, 1941].

*Printed by request of many who heard the address.—John R.
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“Under Christianity begins that position of woman, which has been since, both an element and an evidence of the progress of the most advanced races. With all changes of society, she has never lost the halo which the New Faith threw about her then, and . . . even the submergence of the Roman Empire under the Northern barbarians, only aided the influence of Christianity in exalting the weaker sex.” This statement by Charles Loring Brace in a volume first published in 1882 and going through five editions in fifteen years modestly affirms one of the chief innovations of the Christian Religion and one of the most fruitful for civilization [Gesta Christi, cf. p. 35].

That the relatively advantageous position of woman in society and in religion in the course of “humane progress under Christianity” and within Christendom is the gift of Jesus Christ to women and to the world is not now so widely recognized as it deserves by modern makers of history nor even by women who claim and exercise their freedom but who do not always accept the opportunities and obligations which this freedom involves.

The uniqueness and originality of Jesus among the founders and interpreters of religions in his attitude toward women does not stand out in prominence for most people. Brace, in the volume cited, contrasts the Christian teaching and practice with what one finds in the founders and in the most influential literature of other religions. Even more fully and forcefully is this contrast developed in two addresses pre-

served in a remarkable volume of "Papers and Addresses presented at The Woman's Congress of Missions," held in connection with the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and published by the American Tract Society in 1894, under the title *Woman in Missions*. All the seventeen addresses were by women. Two of them discuss "*Woman in the World's Religions*."

The Christian Gospels contain no statement more amazing and more revolutionary than one recorded incidentally and almost casually by John in his story of the death and restoration of Lazarus. "Now Jesus loved Martha—and her sister—and Lazarus." "Jesus loved Martha." It would have been impossible—unthinkable—that this should have been said of Manu, traditional law-giver of the Hindus; of Gautama the founder of a faith that embodied ethical revolt against the deadening social shackles of the all-dominant Hinduism; of Kung-fu-tze the prophet of social ethics for more of humanity's millions than have shaped their lives by the teachings of any other leader of men; of Zoroaster, most ethical and spiritual of all prophets outside the stream of the Hebrew-Christian tradition; of Mohammed, who although he owed his opportunity and influence to an extraordinary woman and had also opportunity to learn from Jesus, still failed utterly to appreciate the personality potentiality of womanhood, and under profession of guarding her purity beyond all other teachers put her under a bondage more complete than in any other system. Moses stands on a higher plane than any other law-giver of men's religions and more consciously interpreted the purpose of ethical Deity. Yet even of Moses it could not have been said that he loved an individual woman, without detriment to his standing and influence. Before his own conscience and in the eyes of his disciples it would have been a demolishing disgrace for any other founder to have spoken of women as Jesus did and to have treated them as he treated them.

"Now Jesus loved Martha." That statement embodies with concrete definiteness one of the most central and essential teachings and factors in Christianity.

“Manu’s whole teaching about woman is based on the assumption of her impurity.” If a Brahman is reading the Veda, and a woman comes within range he must cease for “her ear is not pure enough to hear what the vilest man may read.” “A virtuous wife,” must revere her husband as a god, however base and even licentious he may be. No sacrifices or fasts are permitted to women in Hinduism. For sacred oblation let her “wash the feet of her husband and drink the water. For the husband is to the wife greater than Vishnu.” Out of the conception reflected in these rules come child marriage, and child widowhood, sati and infanticide, nautsch dancing and prostitution. Woman has no individuality—without a husband has no soul, and human existence only in father or husband.

Gautama, despite his praise for his relatively high ethical standards and his embodiment of the spirit of gentleness, gave to woman no independent identity on the human plane and allowed to her hope of rising in the scale of being only on condition of her so accepting her position in relation to man and to the Buddhist ideal as to have her Karma integrate its next existence as a man: only then she might set foot on the noble eight-fold path that leads to Nirvana. According to the elaborate legends, to his foster-mother-aunt’s persistent pleadings he finally permitted her to organize the order of nuns, knowing that as the price of such an ignoble concession he was delaying for ages his own beatification and the coming of the final Buddha. One of the penalties for crime in man was femininity in a future existence.

With all his social ethics Confucius has no word to condemn the evils which women suffer, polygamy, ignorance, slavery. He teaches, and for nearly five thousand years China has practiced the doctrine: “Man is the representative of heaven and is the supreme over all things. Woman yields obedience to the instruction of man and helps to carry out his principles. On this account she can determine nothing of herself, and is subject to the rule of the three obediences: when young she must obey her father and elder brother; when mar-

ried, her husband; when her husband is old she must obey her son" (Brace 455). There was in China no school, private or public, for teaching girls until Mrs. Shuck opened the first in 1837. When Christian missionaries began teaching girls in India the opposition sometimes reached the stage of riot.

Shinto taught that woman is the creature of man; that her husband is her god; that she is to be divorced if she fails in obedience to her husband's parents.

Into a world that subordinated, depressed, degraded and exploited women came Jesus with his clear-visioned humanity. Through the revelation of God in Israel and the prophets of God to Israel a path had been opened which he straightened and widened to make it a highway of honor for women and for men and women as together they should walk the way of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus' attitude toward women appears in the record as a matter of course. It is not justified or defended. He simply did and said what was right and left it to be accepted and applied. It was not his way to support his teachings by argument or appeal to authority. He spoke "as having authority"—the authority of essential reality. 'His Father abiding in him was doing his works' and his words were the definitions of the deeds of God. In nothing is this more true and to him more natural. His ways with and for women were often shocking even to the Hebrew ideas of propriety with reference to the place of women in religion and in life.

He treated women simply as human beings and with only such reference to their sex as circumstances made natural and inevitable. If the Twelve were amazed to find him at Jacob's well talking with a woman, he wholly ignored their astonishment, and no one of them ventured to ask an explanation of him or in his presence to rebuke the boldness of the woman.

If Jesus had taught Nicodemus alone the spiritual demand for rebirth into the Kingdom of Heaven, with equal readiness he gave the lone Samaritan woman the deep word about the spirituality of true worship and the unimportance of place equally in case of Mount Gerizim and the Holy City. If to

a single penitent robber from his cross Jesus pledged immediate immortality with himself in Paradise, so also to Martha alone in a quiet place he gave the assurance "Thy brother shall rise again," and went on to give the deepest word anywhere recorded concerning personal immortality: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

If Zacharias, Joseph and Simeon constituted a trio of men with spiritual insight to receive him, they are matched by Elizabeth and Mary and Anna "a prophetess" waiting in her great age to see and declare the consolation of Israel. If Jesus chose twelve disciples to aid him in his ministry and to be the custodians and prophets of its continuance, equally did he recognize the company of women who went about with him through cities and villages and ministered to him and the Twelve out of their substance.

The humanity of Jesus is appropriated through his mother. The first words of his found in the Gospel record were spoken to his mother to whom he announced his unique relation to his divine Father and the compulsion of his dedication to the affairs of his Father. His last words addressed from the cross to human need in loving personal concern committed his mother to his "beloved disciple" and him to her in the relation of son and mother, a relation which he had sanctified and glorified in the Nazareth years.

His disciples from Galilee and from Judea who attended and witnessed the bewildering intensity of events which left their Lord in Joseph's tomb outside Jerusalem, and who held sad conferences and vaguely wondering vigil in that upper room whence he had taken up his journey via Gethsemane and Calvary, included women and men. Out from the tomb he first encountered women, to one of whom he gave his first resurrection message and a commission to his men. Together men and women were led by him to Olivet for the ascension commission and blessing. Together they waited and planned for service until Pentecost, when all alike "were filled with

the Holy Spirit and began to speak . . . the wonderful works of God." In explaining Pentecost as the fulfilment of God's promise-plan "through the prophet Joel," Peter included the women: "I will pour forth of my Spirit . . . and your daughters shall prophesy. . . Yea . . . on my bondmaidens in those days will I pour forth my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

And in the event and in the progress of the gospel we meet in the New Testament a Lydia as patron and leader in the first church of Europe under Paul's ministry; a Priscilla who takes the lead of her husband in 'expounding more perfectly the way of the Lord'; a Chloe, deaconess of the church at Cenchreae; an Apphia who for Paul is "our sister" alongside his "beloved fellow-worker Philemon" in whose house a worshipping, working assembly found a home; and many another woman "who labored with" the men "in the Gospel" and were given indiscriminating recognition.

How could it be otherwise in a religion founded by Jesus? In him as the Christ there "can be no male and female," for we "are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:38). Christian husbands must keep the prayer way to God's presence open by "dwelling with their wives on an intelligent basis, giving honor to the woman as (physically) the weaker vessel, but as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life."

For the first time in human history men and women, in the religion and the church of the Christ, were put on a basis of equality in worth, in grace, in privilege, where each according to fitness and spiritual gifts was to find and fill the appropriate and effective function for the growth of the Body of Christ.

This ideal of Jesus and practice of the early church has not had full expression in any social order nor in the Christian churches in any period of their history. In the New Testament this was not set forth as a demand nor as a dogma. Like slavery and other social institutions the subordination of women to the will of men was to be corrected and overcome not by direct assault and dogmatic teaching but by the legitimate working of the spirit and the ideals of Christian community.

The oppressed and suppressed elements of society were not taught or encouraged to go forth crusading for rights. Christianity calls upon its followers to serve, not to assert themselves; to proclaim God's grace for all, and themselves ever bearers of blessing to others. Only thus can organized Christianity be prophetic, be the church of God as distinguished from a society for social change and a partisan movement divisive of community life. Christianity is not a warfare against men and groups with other ideas; it is a society of witness to the Kingdom of God, associations of evangelism, not organizations demanding favors or rights. In the social order Christians constitute leaven, not dynamite; not social dynamite but spiritual dynamic Christianity. It releases the power of God in a gospel, but does not accumulate force to enforce claims. Through the centuries Christian women have witnessed and served and waited on God to enlighten Christian men concerning their place and capacity in Christian institutions.

The Christian church arose in a man's world and its men thought largely in terms of masculine responsibility and dominance. Nor does the Christian idea change the fact of masculine responsibility, even as it saves man from the spirit of domination and the arrogance of superiority.

The Christian movement has expanded through the centuries into regions and cultures which were controlled by men and subordinated and dominated women. Thus almost universally men have applied and women have accepted in the churches the social standards and conventions of the communities in which the churches arose. This they did almost unconsciously and in this, as in so many other matters, did not seek to find and express the mind of Christ or give freedom to the genius of the Christian religion. Very naturally and inevitably men were the interpreters of the terms of the New Testament and expositors of the Christian principles. A too masculine cast has been given to the interpretations and expositions. Jesus Christ has not been thoroughly understood nor has his mind found full expression in the polity and procedure of his churches. Dr. F. A. Agar has facetiously ex-

pressed a damaging fact by describing the churches in their administration as manocracies. This fact has too often, and even in matters of great import, caused the churches to stand between the gifts of the Christ to the women and his gift of the women to the world. Who has not seen women with obvious gifts of the Spirit silenced and thwarted by some man without any spiritual gift!

All translations of the Christian Scriptures reflect the warped viewpoints of man-controlled institutions in passages dealing with women, and the established interpretations further misrepresent the meaning of the original words. The most glaring example of this is the passage in Ephesians 5:22-32. The Authorized version reads verse 22, "Wives obey your husbands, as unto the Lord." There is no imperative in the Greek text; this is not a sentence at all but the closing participial phrase of one of Paul's long sentences beginning four verses further back; and the word does not mean obey. Furthermore, the voice of the participle is not active or passive, but middle. It carries an exhortation to women in the disposal of their own lives. The autonomy of the wives is left with them and the responsibility for their behavior is left with the wives.

In the two succeeding paragraphs, in chapter six, we do have the word obey, in the imperative mood of a verb that places the authority in the parents over their children and masters over slaves. *ὑπακούετε* means hear as a subordinate and carry out the will of another who has right to command.

Wives, in the autonomous responsibility for their own conduct under God, are expected to order their lives in voluntary adjustment to their husbands as rightful head of the family. This perversion of grammar, syntax and sense has become "law" instead of gospel and found place in the approved marriage ceremony of the sacramental churches from which most of the democratic churches have borrowed it.

To follow up this misinterpretation, we find twelve verses, with thirty-eight lines, in the American Standard version, enjoining reciprocal duties on wives and husbands. Here men

being the expositors and preachers it has come to be generally understood that the major emphasis is on the duty of the wife and often it is wholly ignored that the husband comes in for any instruction. Now the fact is that 3 verses, 8 lines, are devoted to wives, while 8 and 2/3 verses of 28 lines emphasize the Christian standard for husbands; with one and a half lines at the end usually applied to the wives, but requiring the supplying of two verbs to give it that interpretation. Worse still, there is not an imperative verb applied to the wife, but the husband is laid under an imperative supported by several lines of argument. I came across an illuminating illustration of the almost universal ignorance of the facts about this celebrated passage in the book of an English Episcopal author devoted to the rights of women in the church and even in its ministry. He felt that this passage needed some evasive explanation, and began his effort to clarify it in the interest of his argument by admitting that its emphasis was on duties of women rather than men. It seems not to have occurred to him to consult the passage, which would have saved him some side-stepping and given him a powerful support for his liberal contention.

Thus far in almost all church bodies since the first century, in modern times in evangelical churches—from the Episcopal to the cross-roads Baptist church—it has been assumed that in the man-dominated ecclesiastical bodies and in the man-voting democracies the men are to determine “the place of the woman in the church”—which is the title of an important volume by a number of Episcopalians and published both in England and the United States. In general it is true that recognition of woman, in all spheres of community life, has followed demonstration of her inherent capacity in unencouraging environment. And in all ages every generation finds some women of outstanding influence, and this has been true in the Christian church more than anywhere else.

In the western world and in the last hundred years women have come into ever increasing recognition and in many respects have become units integral in the social organism, with creative power and influence.

During the past hundred years in the west, especially in Great Britain and the United States, women have increasingly asserted themselves and demanded their rights. This approach is very human but not essentially Christian, as already indicated. It has largely been in fields we designate secular that the campaign has been waged, politics, industry, business, education, suffragist crusading and other specialized agitation brought forward a comprehensive movement called feminism. This has unfortunately been untempered by Christian ideal, motive and aims; and the churches all too often set themselves to oppose it entire, thus antagonizing the legitimate full autonomy of woman as a unit in every social organism.

The first world war disrupted all forms of organized life. Women were needed for many tasks on unprecedented scale. They responded with restless eagerness. Important constraints and orderly restraints dissolved. Women claimed and men encouraged "rights" that are proving ruinous to morale and morality and threatening the stability of our civilization. Women have as much right as men to drink, to gamble, to be profane, to sex indulgence, to all forms of dissipation and license. Which is true as a statement but is a wholly false and destroying statement. Women have as little right to demean themselves and debase their humanity and to ignore God's ideals for society as have men, which is no right at all. If women shall in any large measure demand the right to be as bad as men our civilization is doomed and there is no hope for humanity. Through the centuries men have required women to carry a disproportionate share of the moral and spiritual burden of human progress. They have practiced the dual courses of debasing and debauching some part of woman-kind for their own pride of authority and for their indulgence of animal instincts and passions, while at the same time they axacted with sternest demand the modesty, purity and spirituality of the women they chose to honor and these carried the hope of the human race.

Now the time has come when women in their freedom must accept the challenge of a high calling and demand of

men a revaluation of themselves, and a readjustment of social responsibility. The hope of the hour and of the future lies with Christian womanhood, emancipated from masculine subordination by the freedom of the truth in Christ Jesus; and in Christian men and women accepting the high calling of God in Christ Jesus to work together for the saving of mankind to the glory of God.

Within Christianity woman's freedom of action has been achieved through demonstration of efficiency in service. That they have "gifts of the Spirit" cannot be questioned by any who see them exercising these gifts. And, as one writer puts it, "The organization of the church," in Paul's teaching and practice, "depends upon God's free bestowal of the gifts of the Spirit" and this "must carry with it the consequence women must be just as unfettered in the use of their gifts as men themselves." Note that we must still say "as men themselves," thus confessing that man is still the measure and in great degree the arbiter of woman's freedom even in Christ Jesus.

The demonstration of woman's opportunities and responsibilities in Christian service found their first realizations in missions. It was natural that it should be so. From the beginning missions revealed the humiliations and oppressions of women in pagan civilizations and the unspeakable sufferings they endured. The compassion of Christian women was bound to express itself in "Women's Mission to Women;" and all the more so as the seclusion of women in the heathen lands was seen to make them inaccessible to men in mission service. American women had just enough experience of subordination and repression to serve as index to the shame and damage involved in the bondage in which they were held in non-Christian lands. Christian women could not fail to go with the saving gospel of the Christ to women mured within purdah walls and suffering the seclusion of harems. They could not be held back from answering the unutterable appeal of little girls made victims of stupid and wicked customs of social convention in pagan civilizations and among the uncivilized. Ignorance, child marriage and widowhood, chattel

slavery from birth to death, these called women to transcend the conventions that were still restraining in Christian lands. Minds once opened for inescapable response to distant call and opportunity beheld waiting tasks in reach of hands at home and in ever-expanding forms their work in the churches and in the Kingdom of God developed in the older realms of Christendom.

Even fifty years ago Mrs. J. T. Gracey portrayed the character and sketched the work of thirty-nine "Eminent Missionary Women." Later Mrs. Montgomery told of the work and worth of "Western Women in Eastern Lands." Biographies of women who served in missions have multiplied into an extensive library. In 1938 the Central Committee for United Study of Foreign Missions issued through the Friendship Press a remarkable volume, *Women and the Way*. A dozen women of ten nationalities tell what the Christ in his Way has done for women the world around. And the products of missions in exalted and revolutionizing womanhood in the lands that lay under the shadow of pagan depression have been worthy of single biographies and group stories that make up another commentary on the creative power of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Eminent Christian women in mission lands have thrilled and blessed the world in all lands, from the Pundita Ramabai to the famous Soong family, mother and three great daughters, most distinguished of whom is the wife of China's Chiang-Kai-Shek.

With the expansion of the spheres of women's activity logically came demand for training for service. The minds that must serve the gifts of the Spirit must be informed to understand and trained to do and to direct. The order of Jesus in planning a Kingdom ministry was call—training—commission—empowering by the filling of the Holy Spirit with his varied gifts. Preparation precedes Pentecost. American Baptists learned this lesson for their men ministers more than a half-century before they became aware that women workers would also require training "their calling to fulfill."

With characteristic conservatism and caution Southern Baptists found it especially hard to break the shackles of

cherished—if unholy—traditions. The very names of the earliest women's organizations in behalf of missions testified to accepted dependence and inferior status: mite societies; female missionary societies, aid societies. Even when a few Southern women grew sufficiently bold in the Lord to enter the rift of controversy over them among the male servants of the Master and to organize for large participation in the missionary work, they found it necessary to go forth without the camp of the Southern Convention bearing the reproach of the Christ. They accepted with humble modesty the permission of a majority of the brethren, emphasizing their desire only to serve by asking only to be recognized as "auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention," the status which they still hold pending the time when their full membership in the institution of Christ may find practical confession. Meantime the W. M. U. has grown so strong and important and its functions so distinctive as to make it doubtful whether the progress of the Kingdom would not be confused and delayed if the women's organization should be merged in the Convention on the basis of common interest and calling.

Women who "labor in the gospel" require training. Their intuitional approaches to principles of truth and life and their emotional response to openings and opportunities make them especially ready for generous and sacrificial service; but these qualities also subject them to peculiar danger of unsound methods and of movements lacking proper relation and balanced continuity. Besides training in the effective expression and implementing of their normally superior qualities women need the orientation of history and the setting of the contexts of comprehensive thought and of interrelated phases of work and institutions. Equally with men, women require and desire training in order that the labor of their hands may be established and that they may be steadfast and immovable as they abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that their efforts will not be in vain. One needs only to take account of the fact that women have been the founders of a number of bizarre movements in which wisdom was overweighted with emotion to see that knowledge and good understanding are

needed to control their good intentions and devotion of spirit. Theosophy and Christian Science are major examples of the danger. Two of the most extensive modern sects in Japan were originated by women whose idealism and personal powers lacked the constraint and wisdom which education and understanding might have provided.

The story has been often told of how this Training School originated to meet the need of young women seeking in Seminary classes the training for Christian missionary work to which they were dedicating their lives and for which no provision had been made.

It is also part of the Training School tradition cherished with frequent repetition that it was in the mind of a missionary, Dr. E. Z. Simmons of China, that the seed thought was planted by the Holy Spirit. He had seen the need for such preparation for women missionaries as could be had only in an institution devoted to the equipment of women for the growing opportunities and demand for their distinctive gifts. Conditions in China and on other fields were developing larger and larger demands for women.

The Holy Spirit transplanted the idea from the soul of Simmons to the nurturing hearts of some women at home, chief of whom at first was Miss Eliza Broadus. Thus at length influences converged and produced this school for training our daughters for their work of prophesying. Out of it have gone more than twenty-two hundred daughters of prophecy polished after the similitude of a palace.

You who graduate tonight have come into this heritage of high calling. You will take your place in the goodly procession and go forth to proclaim the mercy of our God, the love of our Redeemer, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the acceptable year of Jehovah and the open door of the Kingdom of Heaven. You go called, trained, commissioned. You will expect and await your Pentecost. Clothed with power from on high you will accept the specific gifts of the Spirit. And do you henceforth be each of you a gift of the living Christ to humanity in this hour of its deepest need.

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Off-print from *Review and Expositor*, July, 1941