

to blame for this ; for under its system women, while allowed to engage in all useful avocations, were ordinarily to be sustained in the privileges of domestic life by their male relations, or failing these, by the church itself : and those who had been deprived by death of their natural protectors were to be employed in missionary work. These were the "widows indeed" of the Apostle Paul. The work of this christian ministry, whether educational, benevolent, or religious, was evidently the sole public profession recognized for women in the New Testament. But the world is not yet sufficiently christian or sufficiently civilized to appreciate fully the social beauty of Christianity. Hence it is full of wrangling as to the rights and privileges of women who must earn their daily bread, and especially of those who must earn it by the labour of the brain rather than of the hands.

I may sum up the position of women in a truly christian society by an example which, though old, bears on present questions. When Paul the apostle crossed over from Troas, there may not have been a solitary christian in all Europe. In Philippi he went on the sabbath day to the meeting-place of his Jewish countrymen. He found there a few pious women holding a prayer meeting. There must have been Jewish men in Philippi, but all were too careless or too busy to attend to the obligations of the Sabbath. A few women represented all the true religion of the place. The hearts of some of these women were touched by the message of Paul, and in the house of Lydia—a dealer in purple, and a christian lady—met the first Christian Church in Europe. This instance illustrates the position of women in the Jewish and early christian church. The heathen women of the period were degraded to the lowest point by the licentious character of their idolatry and by its failure to recognize anything true or good in the nature of woman. The Jewish women everywhere occupied a higher plane, based upon the spiritual and moral teaching of the Old Testament, and as was natural, their religion was less that of the law and more that of the prophets and psalmists than that of the men. Hence in every Gentile city the Jewish women were a pure and holy element to which we find that many of the better natures among the Gentile women, "the honourable women," of the Acts of the Apostles, joined themselves. It was from these that the women of early christianity were recruited, those efficient helpers of the Apostles to whom Paul so often refers.