

The Priest, the Woman and the Confessional

There are two women who ought to be the constant objects of the compassion of the disciples of Christ, and for whom daily prayers ought to be offered at the mercy-seat—the Brahmin woman, who, deceived by her priests, burns herself on the corpse of her husband to appease the wrath of her wooden gods; and the Roman Catholic woman, who, not less deceived by her priests, suffers a torture far more cruel and ignominious in the confessional-box to appease the wrath of her wafer-god.

For I do not exaggerate when I say that for many noble-hearted, well-educated, high-minded women to be forced to unveil their hearts before the eyes of a man, to open to him all the most sacred recesses of their souls, all the most sacred mysteries of their single or married life, to allow him to put to them questions which the most depraved woman would never consent to hear from her vilest seducer, is often more horrible and intolerable than to be tied on burning coals.

More than once I have seen women fainting in the confessional-box, who told me, afterwards, that the necessity of speaking to an unmarried man on certain things, on which the most common laws of decency ought to have for ever sealed their lips, had almost killed them! Not hundreds, but thousands of times I have heard from the dying lips of single girls, as well as of married women, the awful words: "I am for ever lost! All my past confessions and communions have been as many sacrileges! I have never dared to answer correctly the questions of my confessors! Shame has sealed my lips and damned my soul!"

(The Priest, the Woman and the Confessional by Charles Chiniquy, Montreal: F. E. Grafton, 1875, Kindle, Page 11 of 148; From Chapter 1, The Struggle Before the Surrender of Womanly Self-Respect in the Confessional)