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## The Women of the Everlasting Covenant

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**Abstract:** A poem written by Elder Orson F. Whitney while on his first mission to Ohio in 1877. It was dedicated to his mother, "Whose life and character are faithful exponents of the principles herein portrayed, and to all mothers in Israel whose lives show equal virtue and integrity, this poem is affectionately dedicated."

drives selfishness from the heart and lengthens the cords of human feelings, leading one to do greater deeds of kindness outside of his or her own little circle. Those who are so narrow minded as to think of no one's comfort and pleasure but their own, are not capable of enjoying any great amount of eternal glory. We can never enjoy anything to its fullest extent until we have first tasted of its opposite. But if a wife and mother does her part, is true to her husband and teaches her children to walk in the true path, holding out faithful to the end, all she suffers will but add greater laurels to her crown in the world to come. And the future happiness of such, could they obtain even the slightest glimpse of it, would repay them, and they would be willing, even anxious to endure all that was possible to make them deserving of that pure and unalloyed bliss of which I solemnly testify that I have had a foretaste.

I have not written with "the pen of the fanatic," but with the heart "of a woman," who is in earnest, and does not "prefer the glory of man above the glory of God."

I here publish, by permission, a poem written by my eldest son while on his first mission in Ohio, in the year 1877. It has appeared in print before, but not in its present form, having been lately revised and, as will be seen from the title, is appropriate to the theme upon which I have written :

## THE WOMEN OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

TO MY MOTHER,

*Whose life and character are faithful exponents of the principles herein portrayed, and to all mothers in Israel whose lives show equal virtue and integrity, this poem is affectionately dedicated.*

SPIRITS elect of Abram's royal race!  
Through tears of welling sympathy, I trace  
The record leaves whose silent tongues unfold  
A part of what could never all be told,  
And bow, in admiration, at the shrine,  
Whose incense—woman's love—proclaims it thine.

In vain, alas! in vain of such to sing,  
 With trembling hand, a tuneless harp I string;  
 When earthly numbers, richest, were but rare,  
 Whose words suffice such merit to declare.  
 'Tis written in the heavens, and shall move  
 To praise and pity, all that live and love  
 Where voices, soaring in celestial song,  
 Resound the realms of endless life among.  
 These honor give, where honor's wealth is due—  
 A hymn of heaven's praise, for hearts as true—  
 And echoes, soft as rain in early spring,  
 Bequeath to earth the muse's offering.

Of all the virtues that, uniting, frame  
 The lofty column reared to Duty's name,  
 Whose summit pencils on the glowing sky  
 The deeds of those whose names refuse to die;  
 O'ercrowning all, in triumph of device,  
 Is woman's life of love—self-sacrifice  
 For other's good; the grandest, godliest theme,  
 That e'er inspired a mortal poet's dream,  
 Or, in yon upper worlds of starry fire,  
 Awoke the music of an angel's lyre.  
 The holiest, far, that ever yet had birth,  
 Since moulded chaos took the name of earth,  
 And rudimental spheres were made abode,  
 For mortalized immortal sons of God.

Would frowning Incredulity intrude,  
 To voice the verdict of ingratitude?  
 Corrosive jealousy, devoid of ruth,  
 Tarnish the lustre of eternal Truth?  
 The slumbering fires of history shall flame  
 The proof that hides dubiety in shame,  
 Far up the kindling heights of bygone days,  
 From mem'ry's tow'rs, unnumbered beacons blaze.

Need other pages be revisioned o'er,  
 The later times evolve their golden store,  
 Unselfish nature of true woman's love—  
 That oft-exempl'd verity—to prove?  
 Then let an ever-doubting world behold  
 What more than past, the present can unfold;  
 Ye roving breezes! Catch the rising sound,  
 And let it, from the vaulted heav'ns redound  
 Upon the ingrate source whence cavil sprung—  
 Unfamed, and envious because unsung—  
 Till e'en the silent stones with echoes ring,  
 And proverbs, re-affirmed, conviction bring.

Within the mighty grave-yard of the past,  
 Whose hoary sepulchres survive the blast  
 Of stormy change, or enervating age,  
 And still preserve their time's unwritten page:  
 Where look for monuments of nobler stand,

Upreared by Labor's wonder-working hand,  
 Than court, with pride, the sun-illumined dome,  
 From wid'ning vales of Israel's mountain home?  
 Within the temples of recorded praise,  
 Where Glory shrines the arts of other days;  
 From darkened Babel's heaven-searching tow'r,  
 Down through the cycled ages, till the hour  
 When Ephraim's prophet to the world revealed  
 The ancient rites by erring Rome concealed;  
 Where seek for wonders found of worthier fame,  
 Than martyr's crown inscribed with Zion's name?

Behold her laurels! Ay, of endless bloom,  
 Above the fiat, whose relentless doom—  
 Ignoring haughty Science' puerile strife—  
 Pronounces death and change on all of life;  
 The hallowed bays that deck her furrowed brow,  
 Surpassing in their beauty, even now,  
 So promising their vernal glories grow,  
 In heav'n's eternal summer yet shall glow.  
 The honors of the world may pass away,  
 But such as these shall never know decay;  
 In that TO BE, whose coming shuns reprieve,  
 Whose portal won, hope dies of past retrieve,  
 Where righteous laws just dues of merit give,  
 They cannot die—they but begin to live.

But who shall name the cost, the sacrifice  
 Of earthly feelings, passion, prejudice,  
 The mothers of a more than Spartan race,  
 Compelled their souls of halting dread to face?  
 Can human eye, or pen, or tongue, disclose  
 The pain another bosom undergoes?  
 Or finite vision's artful searching find  
 The woes that shade a silence-haunted mind?  
 What other voice, than Zion's own, shall break  
 Her sufferings for holy conscience' sake?  
 Whose words, than modern Sarah's, e'er shall tell  
 The story of a burden borne so well?  
 O ye, who marvel faith's disparity!  
 Gaze on the book with eye of charity,  
 Nor deem the simpler lessons written there,  
 Of worth devoid, of moral beauty bare;  
 Nor judge in haste, lest, haply, ye condemn  
 The things 'twere better honor than contemn,  
 For Truth oft dazzles Judgment with its rays,  
 And ways of God are not as mortal's ways.

“Behold my law”! Omnipotent decree!—  
 Brought Israel, on lowly bended knee,  
 Before Jehovah's throne, with quivering breath,  
 Resolved to live what seemed a living death,  
 Or die, in holding the uplifted hand,  
 Sustaining God Almighty's great command.

'Twas thus Celestial Marriage was revealed,  
 The Patriarchal Order, long concealed,  
 Through mystic Babel's guile and ignorance  
 Subverting Israel's ancient ordinance.  
 The Abrahamic Covenant, restored,  
 To raise a chosen seed unto the Lord  
 On Joseph's fruitful bough, whose branches fall  
 Athwart old Ocean's wild and billowy wall,  
 Deep nourished by an ever-flowing well  
 Of blessings from his father Israel.  
 That law divine, in olden days revered,  
 The sky wherein Messiah's star appeared;  
 Condition sole of blest maternity,  
 Within the mansions of Eternity,  
 Where love-united souls perpetuate  
 The joys that death could not invalidate,  
 And, bound by links forged in terrestrial years,  
 Are chained the endless systems of the spheres.

Ah! marvel well, self-righteous Pharisee,  
 Well named, thou hydra-headed "Mystery!"  
 Thy seers are covered, and thy senses blind,  
 A fool, in wisdom, ne'er shall wisdom find.  
 Truth seeking minds must ever sacrifice  
 The ways of pride, of pomp and prejudice,  
 And reason's spark, that "human gift divine"  
 Within the lamp of Thought unclouded shine.  
 Then, shall its rays the jewel Truth discern—  
 While lips that murmur precious doctrine learn—  
 And, piercing, solve that wondered mystery,  
 A marvel in the realms of history,  
 Why social rule of centuries made way  
 For new-born innovation's moral sway,  
 Why tyrant Custom from his throne was hurled,  
 When Ephraim's star new dawned upon the world.

"Behold the Bridegroom Cometh!" was the cry,  
 Loud pealing from a newly opened sky,  
 And on the hearts of thousands glad'ning fell,  
 Like sunshine on the rolling ocean's swell;  
 The seal of generations broke at last,  
 And lo! the future, and the hidden past,  
 The giant flames of hope and memory,  
 Uniting, form creation's canopy.  
 The glorious beams of gospel light and peace,  
 In native warmth and brilliancy, increase,  
 While swift appearing signals of the time,  
 Invest prediction with a truth sublime.  
 A herald, from the Kingdom of the Skies,  
 Rewards the vigils of the virgins wise,"  
 "Behold the Bridegroom Cometh!" was his cry,  
 And "Lo! we come to meet Him," the reply.

Heroic Zion, rallying at the call,  
 Upon the altar laid her sacred all;

Like martyr at the Inquisition's stake,  
 Who dared to die for dear conviction's sake,  
 With fearless faith, and bleeding bosom stood,  
 To yield her life, if need, for others' good.  
 The vocal winds her watchword onward bore:  
 "Regeneration—now and evermore!"—  
 As armed with mighty faith, no foe could vaunt,  
 No power appal, no pending danger daunt,  
 That valiant few, of willing heart and hand,  
 Along the front of battle took their stand,  
 A holy war for woman's rights to wage,  
 And usher in the dawn of woman's age.  
 Upon her snowy banner's folds is seen,  
 Engrossed in characters of golden sheen:  
 "Up with the guardian of social purity—  
 The marriage system of futurity,  
 Asylum of reform and penitence,  
 God-given boon to homeless innocence;  
 And down with wayward Rome's economy—  
 Parent of nameless ills, Monogamy—  
 Concomitant of empire-crumbling vice,  
 Immolating Virtue at the shrine of Price.  
 Let Innocence no more be child of Shame.  
 Let Nature's needs the laws of nature frame,  
 Let marriage vows be honorable in all,  
 Untrammelled by a monogamic wall  
 Of selfishness and rank hypocrisy,  
 The gift of Pagan aristocracy."

Dare Christian bigotry assign of hell,  
 The law that framed the House of Israel?  
 Condemn as barbarous, or brand as crime,  
 The heaven-accepted rites of olden time?  
 Dare pious priest, or sectary, renounce  
 The righteous truths of Scripture, and denounce  
 The ones Almighty God could condescend  
 To own as Chosen, and to name as Friend?  
 Befoul the words that, glittering, begem  
 The pearly gates of New Jerusalem,  
 In future years to meet them, face to face,  
 And crave admittance to that holy place?  
 Oh, blush for shame, false-hearted Christian'ty!  
 Thou synonym for inconsistency!  
 To shroud the gospel in the glooms of night,  
 Then boast the spread of evangelic light;  
 Proclaim the Scriptures as a sacred prize,  
 Yet teach mankind its doctrine to despise;  
 With holy horror gaze on Jacob's bed,  
 And recommend the Cæsar's couch instead.  
 With all thy vaunted lore, most ignorant,  
 Beneath the light-reflecting firmament;  
 Thy hollow forms a void hypocrisy,  
 Thy solemn groans a mournful mockery,  
 Thy worshipers unconscious infidels,

Of immaterial gods and endless hells,  
 And thou, the Harlot Mother, giving birth  
 To all abominations of the earth.  
 No longer point the finger of thy scorn,  
 At virtues from thy brow forever shorn;  
 No more deride what holy writs defend,  
 Above thy wish or pow'r to comprehend;  
 And till thy bloody robes are purged as clean  
 As those that wake, yet shame, thy jealous spleen,  
 Ne'er threat extermination to a cause  
 Whose only crime's obeying heaven's laws.  
 Restrain thy burning, pompous-worded wrath,  
 Colossal Philistine of modern Gath!  
 Nor 'gainst the pure, and meek, and innocent,  
 From giant bow thy deadly shaft be sent;  
 The God of David reigns above thee still,  
 To fight the battles of His Israel,  
 And e'en, to vie, though hostile millions spring,  
 The fated Stone yet arms the Shepherd's sling.

Ye women of America! give ear!  
 Maternity, the voice of Nature hear!  
 Obedient, listen to the call of Love,  
 Descending, with glad tidings, from above!  
 Too long hath iron tyranny coerced  
 The gentle hearts, forbidden e'en to burst;  
 Too long hath haughty man's preclusive pride  
 The meed of woman's worthiness denied;  
 'Tis finish'd. Hark! The thrilling battle-cry  
 Of "Woman's rights" now rends the echoing sky,  
 As speed, on lightning wings, from clime to clime,  
 The phantom heralds of a dying Time.  
 Her sun, ascending like an orison,  
 Beams brightly on the glowing horizon,  
 Dispelling clouds that linger in its way,  
 Like mountain mists before the god of day.  
 Its course is marked, its radiance fair and true,  
 Its origin, though earth's, to heaven due,  
 Emblem of peace, of happiness and home,  
 Its aim's the zenith of creation's dome.  
 'Tis Zion, as the nations' pioneer,  
 Summons the legions of the main and rear,  
 Ye women of the world! Eve's daughters, all!  
 Awake! Arise! Respond your leader's call.  
 Hear not the poisoned tongues of Zion's toes,  
 Whose specious fabrications would impose  
 A barrier to the union and redress  
 Of wrongs, the ripened harvest of duress.  
 Nor heed of doctrine's wide, divergent ways,  
 Nor resurrect the scenes of buried days,  
 Let mutual friendship bridge the chasm o'er,  
 And peace and union reign forevermore.

Brave daughters of the desert, tried and true!  
 The muse would breathe a parting word to you;

Who, heedless of the odium and scorn  
Of ignorance, or baser envy born,  
Through scenes of toiling woe and adverse fate,  
To make the soul of courage hesitate,  
Approved the wisdom of the stern decree  
That burst the bonds of woman's slavery,  
Roused slumb'ring Faith from self's ignoble zest  
And fixed the star of glory on her breast.  
Admiring millions yet shall view thy name,  
Emblazed upon the storied shaft of fame,  
And whilst they read and, weeping, linger o'er  
Remembered deeds of ages gone before,  
Fair Poesy her golden harp shall string,  
And in her loftiest, smoothest numbers sing  
Of those who, braving still the skeptic's sneer,  
The "Christian's" hatred and the coward's fear,  
Wrought out the problem deep of social life—  
Made Womanhood the synonym for Wife,  
And nursed the chrysalis, whose glorious birth  
Soared heavenward and overwhelmed the earth.  
Hast fought the fight, the martyr's cross hast borne,  
The wrath of man, the world's unreasoning scorn?  
In that eternal future dawning near,  
Whose music, even now, salutes the ear,  
As turn, on golden hinge, the pearly gates,  
Transcendant recompense thy coming waits.

My mother! On thy pale and care-lined brow,  
O'erhung with sorrow's wreath of silver snow,  
Outvying fabled splendor's fairest gem,  
Shall shine, in heaven's light, a diadem;  
Thy tear-dimmed eye shall be forever bright,  
Thy form renewed and robed in living light,  
Where souls redeemed immortal glories share,  
And God is near, and love is everywhere.

ORSON F. WHITNEY.