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Religious Disputes

What About the Church?

Since the creation of the [Marriage Act](#), there has been heated debate among the intellectual members of our society about the degree of separation between God's laws and civic laws, especially those laws relating to marriage. Henry Gally believed that God's law and man's law were one and the same: "All civil laws, which are made for the Good of Society, and are not contrary to the Law of Nature, are approved of by God, and, in this Sense, are his Laws."³⁰ Contingent to this belief is a belief that in order for a marriage to be recognized as binding and legitimate, a couple must be publicly married according to all the proper forms set forth in the Marriage Act of 1753. Mr. Henry Stebbing was of a different opinion, as can be seen in his response to Dr. Gally's "Considerations," entitled "An Enquiry into the Force and Operation of the Annulling Clauses." Mr. Stebbing believed that "...for what in the View of Law is null, in the Views of Religion and Conscience may bind. ... For no Law in the World can make that which in the Nature of it is a Contract to be no Contract; or that which in the Nature of it is binding not to be binding."³¹ Mr. Stebbing believed that it is the conscience and faith of a couple that truly binds them in the eyes of God, not the law of man. But Mr. Stebbing brings up a point that is important for gentlewomen such as us to remember. People of our class who are "Members of Society" must be "bound by the Laws of Society."³² In other words, Ladies, since we have access to the proper forms of marriage and have made a commitment as members of the upper class to make a good representation of English society, we should follow the laws set forth by that society, namely, those laws concerning marriage. This is our duty as the elevated members of our society. We must set an example of virtuous and law-abiding behavior at all times, so that the members of the humble classes may benefit by our instruction. ³³



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