The Angel in the House: The Ideal Victorian Woman

The Victorian ideal of a woman was that of an angel in the house. The phrase “Angel in the House” comes from the title of a popular poem by Coventry Patmore, in which he holds up his angel-wife as a model for all women.

Extract from The Angel in the House (1854) by Coventry Patmore

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often flings for nought, and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes;
And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers:

Paraphrase the action of the poem

What does this tell us about how women and men should behave during this time period?

In comparing women to an angel, do you think this is a way of elevating or restricting them? Explain.