

THE OLD FAITH AND THE NEW WOMAN.

GOOD causes are commonly ruined by bad advocacy, and that in two ways: by the indiscretion of sincere supporters and by the malice of the self-interested and insincere. Nothing is more familiar to us in the history of progress than to see some particular member wrenched away violently from the organic body of truth, built up into an all-sufficing philosophy, and carried to extravagant lengths, being no longer limited and checked by principles co-ordinate or superior. As a lie has no subsistence in itself, but must be hung on a framework of truth, its success varies according as the truth it rests on is more evident, and the distortion it adds to it more subtle and imperceptible.

It is a necessary result of the limitations of the human mind that the whole body of truth, or of any department of truth, cannot at once be apprehended in all its distinctness and unity, but must first be received in the gross, and then noticed in detail part by part, and finally grasped once more in its entirety by an intelligent synthesis. And the means by which this subjective development is usually effected is everywhere the same, whether we speak of the development of Christian doctrine or of philosophical truth. Some detail heretofore overlooked and neglected, not without hurt, forces itself into notice. It proves to be a solution of many difficulties and inconsistencies. Hasty thinkers regard it as an entirely new discovery, and suppose that because it was not explicitly recognized and emphasized before, therefore it was not recognized at all, or was even denied. If it solves so many difficulties, it is confidently predicted that it will solve all. It is not only true, but it is the whole truth, and the old faith and philosophy is indiscriminately condemned. In time, however, the limits of the new doctrine begin to be felt, and it has to be squeezed and twisted to evade the difficulties which present themselves and to meet all the problems it has undertaken to solve; and eventually the maimed and mangled theory is abandoned in favor of some still newer intellectual panacea. But, meantime, the Church, in mere self-defence, has been forced to look within and to look without, and, comparing the new heresy with the old faith, to recognize in the former the perversion of a truth long hidden within her own bosom, but of which now she becomes for the first time explicitly conscious; and while those who move on the topmost path of thought are already wild in the excitement of some new theory,

She is quietly gathering up and appropriating whatever was worth keeping from the *débris* of the last. Hence, if she always drags a little behind the extreme thought of the day, it is in the company of truth; and if the suggestions of progress and healthy reform often originate with her enemies, it is she that corrects, adopts and profits by them. Indeed, it is almost necessary that the Church's attitude towards these revolutionary movements should at first be one of hostility, that her attention should be fixed on the exaggerations and distortions of the truth rather than on the truth itself; for it is usually by the clashing of these excesses with her own teaching that she is roused to interest herself in the matter. Were she to throw herself headlong into sympathy with the cause, approving what is sound, tolerating or ignoring what is unsound, she would be untrue to her mission in lending the force of her authority to increase the impetus of a misdirected movement. Her first duty is to secure accuracy of aim and direction, and, until then, to maintain an attitude not merely of neutrality, but often of opposition and hostility. Thus, all through her history she exhibits the same apparent inconsistency, first rejecting and then accepting the results of progressive thought; yet what she rejects is not the truth, but the lie with which it is entangled; and what she accepts is the pure gold purged from its dross.

This is well illustrated in regard to the results of modern physical science, as well as of political, social and moral philosophy. As long as physicists push their principles and methods into other spheres of truth and try to usurp an unwarranted supremacy for their experimental criterion, the Church has no ears for their discoveries, so intent is she on their fallacies. Similarly, a democracy based on the principles of Rousseau, a socialism which appeals to those of Lasalle and Marx, must find her an enemy; and it is only after she has registered her protest on the face of history that she begins to sift the matter and to inaugurate a counter-reformation.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find numbers of narrower and less liberal-minded Catholics in strong opposition to such counter-reformations, and to the favorers thereof. It seems to them that the Church is in danger of making a false peace with her old enemies. Not discerning the chaff from the grain, all criticism is, to their mind, a concession to rationalism; all political and social reform, to communism and anarchy; all change, a condemnation of the past.

It cannot be denied that the "New Woman" in her extreme type is an abomination to Catholic instincts, nor that the movement which has culminated in her production—(we trust it has

culminated)—is animated by many false principles for which J. S. Mill is largely responsible, although they have been considerably developed of late years. In a disbelief in the sacramental and divine nature of marriage; in a false conception of liberty; in an exaggerated individualism—all the fruits of the Reformation—we find the seeds of this movement which needed nothing but time and a favorable environment to germinate. It is only when, in the light of history, we trace out the progress of a false principle into all its ramifications, finding it, where we least expect, under the most diverse manifestations; when we see how endlessly fertile of evil it is, that we understand the Church's violent intolerance for a lie in any form, and the acrimony with which she insists on distinctions and subtleties which in themselves or in their immediate consequences seem utterly insignificant—mere logomachies and pedantries of the school. As it was only the political evils of the French monarchy which brought the principles of the "philosophers" to a practical and evident conclusion, and the modern industrial crisis which called non-Catholic sociology into light; so it was the pressure of competition and the struggle for existence which first gave public prominence to the question of woman's rights and wrongs—what she might do and what she might not do—and elicited the rationalistic solution of Mill and his followers.

For, on rationalist principles, what justification could be offered for the ancient superstition of man's superiority? The story of the creation of Eve; of the primitive and divine institution of marriage; the belief in its elevation to the dignity of a sacrament typical of the relation of the Church to Christ her head and master—all this is relegated to the region of myths—myths invented to favor the divine right of oppressors. Was it not the old story of slavery over again; of the "natural" superiority of the triumphant white over the black race, of the divine right of conquerors, or of the political and social oppression of the poor? If "each is to count for one, and none for more than one," let the woman count for one, and the man for no more. Is not the liberation and equality of woman a necessary corollary of the equality of all men, and of the great principle of individualism and independence which we owe to the Protestant Reformation? If she is now mentally inferior, is it not the result of centuries of injustice, and of unequal opportunities? If she is physically weaker, such inferiority might have had social significance in barbaric times when brute-force ruled, and when might was right; but is it to be considered in these days, when mind governs the world? Besides, has not this inferiority been exaggerated in fact, and may not the emancipation of woman from conventional re-

striction and her admittance to athletic competitions give some truth to Amazonian fables? And as for the duties and impediments of maternity, there is no reason on rationalist principles why any woman should encumber herself with them more than is just convenient, even if she chooses to enter into the married state—which of course she will only do on a footing of perfect equality with her copartner; for there is to be no question of obedience or dependence beyond that dependence which in every equal and bilateral contract ties one party to the other until it is solved by mutual consent, or by the unfaithfulness of either to the substantial conditions.

This is, in brief, the logical justification of the "New Woman's" position on rationalist grounds—and logically there is no fault to find with it. And of course we do not mean that all New Women are rationalists, but only that, if consistent, they should be rationalists. Many of them favor the movement merely as a freak of fashion; others, because they see much to be said for it, and yet fail to see the full consequences that are involved in it; comparatively few from an intelligent and deliberate acceptance of the entire rationalist creed.

The same principle which tends to dissolve the barrier between classes and masses in point of political power and social privileges must eventually work itself out in the greatest possible equalization of the sexes. Indeed when women get political power into their own hands as they are bound to do, they will strive to hasten that consummation still more rapidly. The New Woman's cause is bound up with the wider one of individualism in practical philosophy, and of rationalism or "naturalism," as we now call it, in speculative. To estimate the strength of that cause is not our present concern; but it cannot fail to be furthered greatly by this accession of female influence, formerly enlisted almost entirely on the other side.

Now, in contrasting the New Woman theory with the teaching of the Catholic religion—which, according to what is, in its way, a true conception of DeLamennais, is only the common sense of mankind supernaturalized—we must carefully discriminate between the immutable principles of the Church's teaching and the local and transitory forms in which those principles are embodied, and by which they are sometimes obscured. Just as we distinguish between the beliefs of Catholics and Catholic belief, so we may not conclude that the condition of woman in any Catholic country or at any particular epoch is the product of Catholic principles unless we can clearly trace the connection, for the leaven of an idea works its way slowly. The Church will tolerate much, and will connive at many inevitable evils attendant on imperfect stages

of social development, if only she can secure the essentials of religion. She "has many things to say" to the semi-pagan and semi-barbarian, but they "cannot bear them yet." The natural growth of subjective truth cannot be hurried, else it will have no deep root; and this is as true of the collective, as of the individual mind.

It need hardly be stated that the two principles of individualism and rationalism are essentially uncatholic and anti-catholic. Although the Church abhors the socialist extreme which enslaves the unit to the multitude, making society an end in itself and not a means to the good of its several members, yet she holds firmly to the truth that it is only in and through society—domestic, civil or ecclesiastical—that personality can be duly developed. In the mystical body of Christ she finds the archetype of all society, whose unity she accordingly concludes to be that of a living organism, and not—as Rousseau—that of an artificial aggregate of independent units, bound to one another by the force of self-interest. "Nemo sibi vivit," "None for himself," is the law of the former association; "each for himself" is the law of the latter. Together with this conception of society as a natural organism goes the doctrine of the right of authority and the duty of obedience. If the subjection of members to the head, of parts to the whole, is demanded by nature, it is therefore commanded by that Personal Power in and above nature. Hence obedience to lawful authority becomes a duty to God, and the right of that authority is, in some sense, divine. On the other hand, if all society originates in a free contract, whereof the motive is self-interest; if no unit cares for the universal good except so far as it is a means to his own isolated advantage, then in submitting to self-imposed restrictions eventually one obeys oneself; which is only an indirect way of saying he follows his own will and not the will of another. In a word, with the artificial or contract-theory of society, the very notion of obedience must vanish.

As, in the Catholic view, the family is the simplest social unit, so the conjugal association is the simplest and germinal form of the family. In that society of two, as in all society, the distinction between head and body, ruler and ruled, is essential, because where a conflict of wills in morally indifferent matters is possible, social life requires a power of determining and ending such controversy; a right of decision on the one hand and of acquiescence on the other. We say "morally indifferent matters," for where it is a question of right and wrong and of God's law, the decision of a higher court has already been given. This right of social superiority in that narrowest of societies the Catholic religion has always attributed to the husband. She has regarded it as the postulate of

nature, and therefore as the command of God. She finds it confirmed by revelation in the account of the primitive and divine institution of marriage, and still more in the restoration of that institution by Christ to more than its pristine dignity; in its elevation to the rank of a sacrament signifying and effecting a relation between husband and wife analogous to that which subsists between Christ the Head, and the Church—His body—the archetype of all social organism. “As the Church is subject to Christ, so let women be to their husbands in all things;” for “the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church.” Obedience in all matters pertaining to that society, and when nothing is ordered contrary to any higher authority, is the wife’s duty; and to command in such matters and under such limits is the husband’s right. And it is not, as contract-theories conceive it, a right which the unmarried woman possesses over herself and in marriage gives over to her husband, as she might give over her fortune, but one which springs into existence for the first time together with the contract. As I cannot obey myself, so neither can I command or force myself; and, not having that power myself, I cannot give it to another, though I can posit the conditions on which he receives it. In every free promise I put myself in another’s power; yet the power exercised over me is not and was not mine, but it is the power of *truth*, or of that Law-giver who forbids me to lie and commands me to fulfil my words. In this sense, all lawful authority is divine, even as truth is.

It is, however, important to notice the distinction between social or official superiority and personal—a distinction ever insisted on by the Church in the interests of liberty. Just as, in her ministers and priests, she bids us discern between the man and his ecclesiastical office, and assures us that the personal unfitness of the minister in no way affects the validity of his ministrations, so, in the question of jurisdiction, ecclesiastical, civil or domestic, she admonishes those in office not to credit themselves with personal superiority, or to govern, as it were, in right of possessing greater wisdom, or holiness, or ability than their subjects; nor to imagine that an appointment necessarily carries with it an infallible guarantee of aptitude, present, past or future. Thus Ignatius of Loyola, who expresses the common doctrine of the Church in a form peculiarly distressing to the pseudo-liberal mind, says in his notorious Letter on Obedience: “For indeed it is not as though he were endued and enriched with prudence or benevolence or other divine gifts of whatever kind that a superior is to be obeyed, but only on this account that he holds the place of God and exercises His authority who says: ‘He that heareth you heareth me.’” The tyranny of individualism in government is altogether opposed

to Catholic theory; and we cannot conclude at once that, because the husband is superior to the wife, therefore the man is superior to the woman; but, at most, that there is in the man, as such, a certain aptitude for that particular office which is not found in the woman. Of that aptitude we shall speak presently. Let it suffice, by way of illustration of our last remark, to refer to the Catholic veneration for the Holy Family of Nazareth, when St. Joseph, as the husband of Mary, held the office of superior over one who, in the Church's estimation, was almost immeasurably his better in light and wisdom and divine grace. Official superiority, therefore, does not involve personal superiority any more than personal superiority in one point or more means superiority all round.

Still less is it in keeping with the Catholic conception that the subjection of the wife should be slavish or the government of the husband despotic. For matrimony is a true "society," and the wife is *socia*, and not *serva*; that is to say, she, as a person, is both intellectually and morally her husband's companion and friend, and the end of their association is not the repression but the fuller development of her personality. And this is the Church's ideal of government everywhere, in home and state, so far as men are sufficiently imbued with unselfish and social instincts to profit by it. The law and the spirit of fear is for the infancy of races; the Gospel and the spirit of love for their maturity. Where the less ideal state of domestic society prevails, the Church may tolerate it as expedient or necessary under the circumstances, but she is never satisfied with it.

Now all this is wholly unintelligible if we accept the contract-theory of society in general and extend it to the matrimonial bond. There is, in that view, as little assignable reason why the wife's place in the association should be one of inferiority as why, in a partnership of any two free individuals for a common advantage, one should preside over the other; and where there is no authority there is no place for obedience.

Thus an American advocate of Woman's Rights, in a chapter headed *Obey*,¹ tells us how he protested one day to a clergyman against the "unrighteous pledge to obey," used in the Protestant marriage service:

"I hope," I said, 'to live to see that word expunged from the Episcopal service, as it has been from that of the Methodists.'

"Why?" he asked. 'Is it because you know they will not obey, whatever their promise?'

"Because they ought not," I said.

"Well," said he, after a few moments' reflection, and looking up frankly, 'I do not think they ought.'"

Common Sense About Women, by Thomas Dentworth Higginson.

It is not the first time that an Episcopalian clergyman has differed frankly from St. Paul. The writer goes on to say: "Whoever is pledged to obey is technically and literally a slave, no matter how many roses surround the chains"—from which we must conclude that soldiers and sailors, civil servants and all subjects are slaves, or else that they are perfectly free, morally and physically, to do as they like in everything. Finally he says: "Make the marriage-tie as close as Church or State can make it, but let it be equal and impartial. That it may be so, the word *obey* must be abandoned or made reciprocal." The idea of "reciprocal obedience" is hard to grasp, but, as far as we understand it, it does not augur well for domestic peace. But, in truth, all obedience is to a superior; and just so far as there is equality, obedience is impossible. In fact, on individualist principles the matrimonial relation is essentially different from what it is conceived to be, not only by Christianity, but by the hitherto unsophisticated reason of mankind. There are still, even for the equalitarian, certain prudential motives which make monogamy desirable and divorce undesirable within given limits, but those limits are soon reached.

It is absurd and futile for would-be orthodox writers to contend against the inevitable weakening of the marriage-bond, which is the necessary result of certain false social principles, unless they are prepared to repudiate those principles altogether. If all authority, civil and ecclesiastical, is only by delegation from the people, with whom it rests inalienably—if it is merely self-interest that binds the members of society to one another; if obedience is only an indirect following of one's own will, subjected to that of another freely and revocably—then the self-interested association of man and woman must be conceived in the same way, and the word "obey" either expunged from the Protestant marriage-service or explained away. Indeed, we must freely admit that the New Woman, or even a newer, who may yet be revealed, is a logical outcome, a necessary product of equalitarianism. That philosophy tends to deny any difference between the sexes that is not strictly physiological. It refuses to admit that, morally and intellectually, they are complementary one of another; that the perfect humanity, the complete mind and character is divided between them; that human parentage is not merely animal, but includes the mental and moral formation of the offspring, to which both parents are instrumental and necessary each in their own way. Beyond the limits of physiology it regards all differences and inequalities as artificial and iniquitous, and it tends logically to the eventual abolition of matrimony in any recognizable sense of the term. It is only those extremists who maintain an essential superiority of woman over

man, and who would gladly see the numbers of the hated sex restricted to the base necessities of society, who have no *locus standi* according to equalitarian principles.

II.

And now we may inquire in what, precisely, consists that inequality which, in domestic society, gives the husband headship over the wife. Those who make no distinction between what is and what must be, between what must be and what ought to be, will freely grant that in the state of rude savagery the wife depends on the superior physical force and liberty of the husband for protection, and that such dependence puts the reins into his hands. But as social evolution relieves her of this dependence more and more, it may be asked, What basis remains for the old relationship? If woman is not intellectually and morally inferior and dependent, why should she be the one to submit? Now it is most necessary to observe that "superior" is here a relative term, implying some end to be secured. The end in question is the government of the domestic society, the government of the members only in matters pertaining to their common good, and in no others. For example, when we agree that in the savage state the man is more fit to govern the house or wigwam than the woman, we mean that he is superior in fighting power, being less physically encumbered. We do not mean that even physiologically he is a superior being all round, but that, having some attributes which she has not, he can secure an end which she cannot—just as, in many matters, she is superior in virtue of capacities which he has not.

If, then, woman's subjection in more developed domestic society is founded on a certain intellectual or moral inferiority, it does not mean that she is all round intellectually or morally inferior to man, but only other than man; it does not mean that she is less fit for high intellectual or moral attainments, but only less fit for government, less endowed, as a rule, with the qualities positive and negative, required for that trust. Whether those qualities are of all others the most admirable and enviable may be questioned. Mr. Kidd,¹ discussing the value of intellect as a factor in social evolution, shows fairly well how far more important are the stolid and earthy qualifications to which the Teutonic races owe their steady progressiveness, and the absence of which makes free government unworkable in Celtic nations. Where idealism, imagination and emotion prevail very widely, they are fatal to that stability which is needed for social order and growth. It was with a fine humor

¹ *Social Evolution.*

that Plato looked forward to the rule of philosophers as an ideal government; nor should we choose a civil president on account of the fervor of his piety or the sublimity of his political conceptions, although allowing these gifts to be far superior to an insight into the theory of taxation. What, then, is this peculiar characteristic which naturally fits man for the headship in domestic society? Aquinas tells us: "There are two kinds of subjection, servile and domestic, or civil. The latter is the kind of subjection whereby the woman is by nature subject to the man *because of the greater rational discretion which man naturally possesses.*" Mr. D. S. Lilly, who also quotes this passage [Shibboleths, p. 168] and who takes a rather severer view of woman's deficiency than ourselves, writes, in the same chapter: "Taking women in general, it may be truly said that in them sentiment predominates over sense; imagination over reason; that in the logical and scientific faculties they are vastly inferior to men; that their emotions are stronger while their will is weaker; that they are markedly deficient in the power of comprehending truth and justice under the pure form of principles and ideas, apart from persons and things." This sounds a heavier indictment than it really is, for all these deficiencies are but the inseparable price of gifts of whose value it is not easy to form a comparative estimate. Sentiment and sense may be antagonistic, but who shall say which, in the absence of the other, is the better qualification? If vivid imagination disturbs the slow workings of cold reason, it is the necessary condition of quick intuitive intellect?

It is hard to say whether emotion without will or will without emotion is the more objectionable perversion of human nature; and perhaps truth and justice may be judged as falsely, or more from the abstract as from the concrete. In truth, to quote Mr. Lilly again, "The force of fanaticism could go no further than to deny the existence of a sexual character. *Das Weib kein Mann ist*, says the German proverb. 'Woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse,' . . . the perfection of the man is not the perfection of the woman. The ideals of masculine and feminine excellence are different." For, indeed, the whole human character in its adequate perfection is put into commission between the two sexes. Morally and intellectually, no less than physiologically, they are complementary; and that not merely as companions or associates, but as parents and educators of their offspring. It is on this natural and necessary diversity of mental and moral character that matrimonial society is founded. But when we reflect on the qualities needed for direction and government, chief among them seems to be that "*discretio rationis*" or reasoning discernment of which Aquinas speaks—a power of taking a cold, impartial, abstract

view of things; a gift immensely useful, if not very attractive. Not, of course, that every man possesses this pre-eminently, but that he does so normally in so far as the masculine character is duly developed in him. Where, on the other hand, it is the wife who excels in this talent, there usually results a disturbance of due domestic harmony, or else a complete inversion of the matrimonial relationships, which confirms the theory of Aquinas very satisfactorily. It is not, however, the actual possession of this reasoning discernment that constitutes or measures the husband's right to govern, any more than the authority of any other ruler depends on his aptitude. The presumption of such aptitude is the implicit condition of his designation, but the designation is not invalidated by the falseness of the presumption.

The scope of marital government, as we have already said, is confined to matters concerning the common domestic good, and the subjection of the wife is not servile but social; "for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth," but the wife is governed in domestic matters, not despotically, without reference to her views and inclinations, but politically, as a person, and with the greatest deference to those views and inclinations which is compatible with the common good. *Nemo sibi vivit*, None for himself, is, as we have said, the ideal of all Christian society. The husband is not made for the wife nor the wife for the husband, but each for the twain.

It will be already evident that there is nothing in the Catholic view favoring a belief in the *general* intellectual or moral inferiority of woman; and how perfectly in accord with the mind of Christianity is her highest development in both respects will presently appear. Of course, we make a distinction between *necessary* and *actual* inferiority. The former may be repudiated very plausibly, the latter cannot. As we have said, the division of labor and of domestic cares which was needed in rude social states, and which is now, and perhaps always will be, needed among the un-leisured classes, requires for the majority of young girls a training which will fit them for their probable after-work; a training which concentrates the mind on small practical details, and which tends, apart from precautionary measures, to produce narrowness, except so far as religion raises the mind to greater and more universal conceptions. Indeed, the very existence of the movement for woman's intellectual emancipation is a confession of an actual and wide-spread inferiority. Again, it may be taken for granted that the unnatural will never so far prevail but that the majority of women will always be involved in the cares of maternity. This, as a heavy tax not only on the time but on the physical energy necessary for severe intellectual work, will put them at a serious

disadvantage. In a word, equality of opportunity, which is essential to fair competition, can never be accorded to that same majority, owing to conditions fixed, not by custom, or by male tyranny, but by nature.

But those who would contend for an all-round essential inferiority of intellect on the part of women have a very difficult thesis to prove, for the simple reason that all their instances are met either by denying equality of opportunity, or by the contention that diversity of intellectual gifts is not the same as inferiority. In proportion as equal opportunities are given from the first, we see everywhere a practical refutation of their view.

How much the Catholic religion, which exalts a Woman to the highest place in creation, favors and furthers her intellectual and moral development and ignores any such essential difference is plain from a retrospect of the past. Let me quote the results of an admirable article in the "Catholic World" for June, 1875, none the less appropriate because written by a woman in reply to Mr. Gladstone's sneer to the effect that the conquests of the Catholic Church in England were "chiefly among women," and therefore of no account. After noting the homage done to woman's intellectual power by the religions of Greece and Rome in the worship of a woman as the goddess of wisdom, and patroness of just and humane warfare; in the cultus of Vesta, of the Muses, of the Fates, of the Graces, and in the honoring of such names as Rhea, Alcestis, Ariadne, Alcyone and so forth, the article goes on to notice her place in the Old Testament as exemplified in the prophetesses and wives of the patriarchs; in Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Esther, and many others. Then we are reminded how it was among women that Christ found his most numerous, apt, and constant disciples when on earth, thus coming under the lash of Mr. Gladstone's sarcasm. St. Paul speaks of the women who labored with him in the Gospel. Timothy learnt the Scriptures from Lois and Eunice. St. Thecla¹ was skilled in profane and sacred science and philosophy, and excelled in the various branches of polite literature. St. Apollonia preached the faith at Alexandria and converted many by her eloquence. St. Catharine devoted herself to the study of philosophy, especially of Plato, and confuted the ablest Pagan philosophers of her day. She is honored as the patroness of learning and eloquence and of scholastic theology, and art represents her as the Christian *Urania*. After remarking that "the increasing demand which we have on every side for a more substantial and scholarly training of the sex does not look forward to that which they never had, but backward

¹ St. Paul's disciple.

to what they have lost or abandoned," the writer reminds us how it was St. Macrina who taught Sts. Basil and Gregory; how Sts. Cosmas and Damian were instructed by Theodora. "Even as early as the second century," writes a distinguished scholar, "the zeal of religious women for letters excited the bile and provoked the satire of the enemies of Christianity." St. Fulgentius was educated by his mother, who made him learn Homer and Menander by heart. St. Paula stimulated St. Jerome to some of his greatest writings, and St. Eustochium was a faultless Hebrew scholar. St. Chrysostom dedicates seventeen of his letters to St. Olympias; and St. Marcella's acquirements won her the title of the "glory of the Roman ladies." The convents of England in the seventh and eighth centuries vied with the monasteries in letters. St. Gertrude was skilled in Greek, and it was a woman who introduced the study of Greek into the monastery of St. Gall. St. Hilda was consulted on theology by bishops assembled in council. Queen Editha, wife of St. Edward the Confessor, taught grammar and logic. St. Boniface was the teacher of a brilliant constellation of literary women.¹ We are told of women who were familiar with the Greek and Latin fathers; of an abbess who wrote an encyclopedia of all the science of her day; of a nun whose Latin poems and stanzas were the marvel of the learned; of the injunction of the Council of Cloveshoe (747) that abbesses should diligently provide for the education of their nuns; of the labors of Lioba in conjunction with St. Boniface; of a convent school whose course included Latin and Greek, Aristotle's philosophy, and the liberal arts; of women in the papal university of Bologna eminent in canon law, medicine, mathematics, art, literature; of Prosperzia de' Rossi, who taught sculpture there; of Elena Cornaro, a doctor at Milan; of Plautilla Brizio, the architect of the chapel of St. Benedict at Rome. In the eighteenth century we find women taking their degrees in jurisprudence and philosophy at the papal universities. In 1758 we have Anna Mazzolina professing anatomy at Bologna, and Maria Agnese appointed by the Pope to the chair of mathematics. Novella d'Andrea taught canon law for ten years at Bologna, and a woman succeeded Cardinal Mezzofanti as professor of Greek. Still more abundant and overwhelming is the evidence for woman's moral and spiritual equality with man in the Church's esteem. If fortitude is in question, we have Sts. Thecla, Perpetua, Felicity, Agnes, Lucy, Agatha, Cecilia, Apollonia, Catherine, and innumerable hosts of women who faced the torments of martyrdom. If men have forsaken their homes for the Gospel's sake in their thousands, women have done so in their tens of

¹ "Valde eruditæ in liberali scientia."

thousands, though for them the wrench, as a rule, is far more violent and painful. In self-denial, in austerity, in patient endurance, in silence, in unselfish devotion to Christ's poor, in all that is rightly supposed to demand the highest degree of self-mastery, they have shown themselves, if not superior, at least fully equal to the other sex.

If the number of men-saints exceeds that of women, it must be recollected that the canonized represent but a handful of the saints, and chiefly those whose sanctity was notorious and before the public gaze; a fact which lessens the chances for the official recognition of female sanctity. For the same reason it is observable how far more frequent is the canonization of bishops than of simple priests, although no one could suppose that saintly priests were less numerous than saintly bishops, considering the numerical proportion of one order to the other. Again, it may be plausibly contended that sanctity in men is more evidently miraculous and out of the common than in women, who in a sense are naturally devout and spiritual-minded.

It would be tiresome to enumerate the religious orders and congregations founded and ruled by women. Indeed, the extent to which the Church has entrusted women with jurisdiction and right of government would seem opposed to the doctrine of Aquinas, referred to above, were it not that this jurisdiction was never, or at least very rarely, exercised over communities of men, and was usually dependent on higher authority vested in bishops or prelates.

In the light of all this, it is impossible to deny that where the Church has her way, and is not trammelled by local prejudices, she desires the fullest possible mental and moral development of women compatible with the discharge of the social duties required by nature and God's law. Here, as among men, the organization of society forbids, and will always forbid, absolute equality of opportunity, capacity and obligation. But it is the aim of sane progress to eliminate all unjust and unreasonable inequalities, and to secure the least possible waste of those spiritual energies in which the true power and wealth of every society consists. Nor must we suppose that it is only in the leisured and unmarried that the Catholic religion desiderates culture. The Church knows far too well the power and influence of the wife and mother not to see that their elevation means the elevation of both husband and children, and that eventually it is they who give the moral tone to the whole community. Woman is naturally the guardian of the spiritual wealth of the family, and for that trust, especially in these days, mere piety, which is not also educated and intelligent, is of little avail. The first formation of the mind is from the mother, and

the impressions which she leaves are indelible. It may truly be said that whatever the Christian religion has done for the elevation of public morals it has done through the instrumentality of woman. A brief study of Mr. Devas's admirable little book on "Family Life" will confirm what perhaps no one with any knowledge of human history will dispute, and prove that where woman is debased and basely thought of, there, in proportion, public morality is at a low ebb. This is the vein of truth which runs through that otherwise very wild and ridiculous though well-written book, "The Heavenly Twins," and makes one wish that the authoress's power had been equal to her aspirations.

We must not, then, credit the Catholic religion with the sentiments of certain more or less pious writers of the male sex who consider an oriental contempt of women to be a great point of virtue; who insist much on the priority of Eve's share in our racial disaster, forgetting that theology regards it as quite insignificant compared with that of Adam, and more than abundantly counterbalanced by the part of Mary in our redemption; who look upon all the immorality in the world as an evil brought upon poor innocent man by that diabolical creature which God made to be a "helpmeet for him"—a little touch of manicheism, such as induces some to regard wine as essentially demoniacal because men choose to drink too much of it. A moment's reflection would show that it is in the reverence and not in the contempt of woman that purity must look for its only reliable safeguard; and it is with this in her mind that the Church counsels a devotion to the Virgin mother in the interests of that virtue.

As regards the admission of woman to the occupations at present monopolized by men, it is well to observe that of the existing restrictions some few are natural and necessary; many desirable in woman's own interest; many, no doubt, now purely customary and conventional, though not without reason originally. It is certainly a pleasure to think that at least one-half of humanity is exempted from the risk of moral and physical degradation attendant on many occupations and callings in the political, civil and industrial world. If some restrictions are merely customary, still customs are to be respected, and public feeling must not be rudely shocked. The majority, being ruled in their tastes and opinions not by reason, as they suppose, but by tradition and imitation, will be equally opposed to all innovation, reasonable or unreasonable. When the opposition is unreasonable, customs must be unformed in the same way as they are formed, namely, by single acts gradually multiplied. No city-bred person is now shocked by the lady-cyclist, yet she who first dared public opinion in the matter must have abounded in brass. Fortunately there

are always such to be met with ; and while we need not admire their forwardness, we must allow their social usefulness and necessity. Similarly, in the matter of dress, what is "unheard of" is not necessarily wicked or immodest. From the days of St. Paul to the present the Church has protested against that species of "irrational costume" which is one of the most persistent survivals of barbarism, based on the supposition that woman's power with man depends solely on her appeal to his senses, and not on her appeal to his soul. But why the "New Woman" should studiously imitate the latest horrors of male attire is a mystery which can be solved only by supposing that her bitterest vituperations veil a secret reverence for man, the monster, and a deference to his æsthetic and practical judgment, or else that inconsistency is not altogether peculiar to the weak-minded women of the past.

In conclusion, if we contrast the ideal of the Christian lady with that of the "New Woman"—one the fair fruit of sound reason enlightened by Catholic faith, the other the base issue of crude equalitarianism and sense-philosophy—there is little difficulty in seeing that the former conception is strong and full of energies yet to be developed, while the latter contains within itself the principles of its own decay and death. The downfall of the family, the profanation of marriage, means the downfall and profanation of woman. It is only in virtue of a faint survival of chivalry—the fruit of Christianity—that the "New Woman," whether she likes to allow it or not, can elbow her way to the front as she does. If man is ever rebarbarized by the withdrawal of the softening influence of home, if woman becomes nothing more to him than a competitor in the general struggle for wealth, she will eventually be forced down to that degradation which has always been her lot under the reign of pure selfishness and brute force. If it is her greater unselfishness which has caused her so much suffering in the past, it has also been the cause of her great power for good. Selfishness is brute force ; unselfishness a spiritual force. She can never compete with man if the contest is to be one of brute force. It is the Church which has raised her, and, through her, raised the world, though both processes are still struggling but slowly towards completion.

GEORGE TYRRELL, S.J.