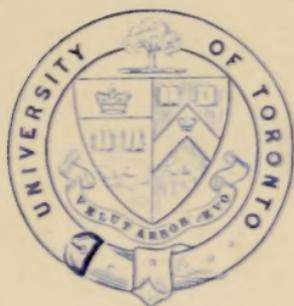




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WOMAN
AND THE
CHURCH



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WOMAN AND THE CHURCH

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WOMAN AND THE CHURCH

BY

REV. B. H. STREETER

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AUTHOR OF "RESTATEMENT AND REUNION"

AND

EDITH PICTON-TURBERVILL

WITH FOREWORD BY

THE BISHOP OF DURHAM

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FOREWORD

THE argument and appeal of these essays seem to me to claim respectful attention. I say this without pledging myself to agreement with the main objective of the book. But the great problem which it handles is of primary concern, and is exercising minds and hearts everywhere at present. So able, thoughtful, and restrained an advocacy of a main view of the problem, in which a man and woman speak out deliberately their convictions and aspirations and in so temperate a spirit, claims reasonably the attention and reflection of Christian minds.

I attempt no forecast, nor do I even touch the great problem here with my own hand. I only say that, while loyal submission to the Holy Scriptures as our

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Master's Word is guarded, we are always called to be ready to find "new light break forth from them," and so to listen calmly and candidly to a thoughtful appeal to reconsider, whatever be the issue of the reconsideration.

H. DUNELM.

INTRODUCTION

“BE ye transformed,” says St. Paul, “by the *renewing of your minds.*” Changing conditions challenge us to reconsider our customs and our standards, and sure it is that they who refuse even to reconsider them, cease to serve not only their own but the rising generation. It is the conviction of the writers of this volume that in the matter of the place and function of women in the active work of the Church such reconsideration is an urgent need. It may perhaps be well to say at the start that the purpose of this book is not to promote an agitation for the throwing open to women of the priesthood and other offices in the existing hierarchy of the Church. It is rather an attempt to demonstrate and to emphasize the position that a wider employment in some way or

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other of women in the preaching and pastoral work of the Church cannot but make for the Church's spiritual welfare. Not only so, it is urged that, apart from this, the Christian message as delivered by the Church will ever be one-sided, and the concrete realization of the Christian ideal will in practice be incomplete.

Women by entering other professions have greatly enriched them. Already there are indications that a deeper spiritual life is manifested in various deliberative bodies in social organizations and movements where men and women work together equally as comrades. Already, however, there are signs that women who spend a life of service in the attempt to realize great ideals are drifting outside the influence of a Church, which practically refuses to women any real share in its regular and recognized ministry. If this continues the loss to the Church and to the world will be incalculable.

Such being the theme of this volume an exhaustive discussion of the whole subject of woman's place in the Church will not be expected. It will, for instance, be

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noted that the historical aspect of the question is hardly touched upon. This would call for a volume to itself. Still less is there an attempt to formulate an elaborate programme of reform. The book is a plea that the whole question of woman's place in the Church be thought out afresh.

Both writers are members of the Anglican Church and write primarily in view of the circumstances and problems of that communion. They feel, however, that principles which are valid in their application to the Church of England cannot but apply *mutatis mutandis* to all branches of the Church of Christ.

The problem we are endeavouring to attack is highly controversial. We cannot expect that all will agree with us. We have expressed our conviction with the clearness and emphasis which the urgency of the matter seems to us to demand ; but we hope we have been able to do so without either feeling or expressing that element of animosity against those who differ from us which has been the bane of so much religious controversy in the past.

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The Christian seeks the path of Truth, a path which is ever veiled when animosity or bitterness influences thought and word.

The Bishop of Durham in his Foreword says that the argument and appeal seem to him to claim the reasonable attention of Christian minds.

We ask for nothing more, and feel that if our readers are prepared to reconsider the question dealt with, "whatever be the issue of the reconsideration," these chapters will not have been written in vain.

B. H. S.

E. P-T.

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CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH AND THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENT

By B. H. STREETER

SYNOPSIS

The Basal Principle of Christian Ethics.
The Moral Bankruptcy of the Churches.
The Licence to Preach a Test Case.
Building the Tombs of the Prophets.
Shall we make "the Great Refusal" ?
Marriage, Parentage, and Divorce.
The Younger Generation.

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH AND THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENT

The Basal Principle of Christian Ethics

THE most original and the most essential contribution of Christianity to European morals is the contention that every human personality, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, is of infinite value to God, and therefore has an infinite claim to respect and consideration from man. No society, therefore, can in any way correspond to the Christian ideal, or can expect to be a prolific nursery of the Christian virtues in which the legitimate rights of personality in any of its members are not first of all carefully ascertained, and when ascertained respected.

All social problems, all political con-

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tentions, all international complications arise from the fact that European civilization has not organized itself on this principle of respect for the full liberties and rights of others, either in the dealings of nations as a whole with one another, or in the relations of the several classes and individuals which compose each nation with the other classes and individuals within it. The reason why European civilization has not organized itself on this principle is not far to seek. It is because only a small minority of Europeans themselves realize or value the principle enough to recognize at all clearly when and where it is applicable, much less to insist on its being applied in any cases where the prejudices or interests of themselves, their own class, or their own country are involved.

The practical consequences of the failure to recognize and apply this principle are no less obvious. The highest civilization the world has yet produced is in imminent danger of committing suicide, both through social and economic disturbance within the nations and through war

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between them. The one hope for the future of civilization lies in a clearer vision of the meaning of this principle and in an unflinching hesitation to apply it in practice. In other words, Christianity, translated into practice to an extent which has never been heretofore attained, is the one thing that can save society.

But if it be true that the Church has a message, or rather that it has indeed the only message there is, of healing and regeneration to a civilization which is palpably committing suicide, is it not somewhat strange that the world shows so exceedingly little inclination to attend?

Let us enquire the reason.

The Moral Bankruptcy of the Churches

The utter impotence of Christianity and Christian opinion in Europe after all these centuries in the matter of making war impossible is a fact which has caused considerable heart-searchings of late to many within the Churches. But small reflection is required to show that it is a fact which can hardly excite surprise.

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The Christian Church is divided into as many sects as there are nations in the world, and for the last three centuries these sects have been carrying on warfare against one another, and that with no less bitterness and with no greater effort to enter into and understand the point of view of those from whom they differ than statesmen and monarchs have shown in the international sphere. Indeed, if the general tone and the language habitually used in the "religious" press about theological opponents or rival sects be compared with that used in the secular press in regard to political opponents or foreign competitors, the advantage in the matter of good feeling (save for a few exceptional organs) will not be found in the professedly Christian periodicals. Is it to be wondered at that a world appalled by the result of the bitterness and competition of group against group looks everywhere for guidance and for healing except towards organized religion, to which it can truly say, "Physician, heal thyself"? It is not the fact that Christians differ from one another which

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scandalizes men—that may be inevitable, it is at least explicable. It is the bitterness, the lack of charity, the intentional misunderstanding, the deliberate misrepresentation which so often accompanies the expression of difference. A world, fully aware of its own shortcomings in this respect, is genuinely shocked to find that organized Christianity actually achieves a lower standard than its own. A civilization organized into national groups which cannot live at peace with one another, and which is constantly trembling at the rumour of some fiercer outbreak of a never-ending class war, is beginning to see that its salvation depends on some fundamental moral change. But it can hardly be expected to seek the source and inspiration of the moral change it needs in a Christianity organized into denominational groups each bitterly assertive of its own political and financial interests or of the exclusive merits of its own *Kultur*.

Many of those who realize that the condition of organized Christianity is not one which is likely to help the world

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towards international peace, yet cherish hopes that at any rate within the nation Christianity may be the great peacemaker—and there is need of such. The class war which all competent observers told us was approaching an acute stage in this country towards the end of 1914 shows no sign of being more than postponed. Unless the parties can approach one another with at any rate the *wish* to understand and the *desire* to do justice to those from whom they differ, the prospects for the future are dark indeed. Can Christianity, can the Church of England, do nothing here?

It can. And it can do so by bringing home to men, with a new insistence and a new intelligence of its practical application, the fundamental Christian principle of full respect for the value and claims of every human person, "Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female." There is no other way. But no one is going to listen to a Church if it is teaching a principle, the right application of which it has been at no pains to ascertain and work out in the relation of its own members within

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its own body. That is why the attitude of the Church towards the Woman's Movement is just now of vital importance. If it be the case—I do not say it is the case—but *if* it be the case that there is anything in the ideals and practices of a Church which involves any slight to the personalities or any indifference to the rights of the women who constitute one-half of its members, can that Church hope to offer, to a world distraught through its neglect of this very principle, a message which will carry any weight at all?

The Licence to Preach a Test Case

It nearly always happens in human affairs that principles of fundamental importance first come prominently before the public in connection with relatively unimportant issues. It has so happened that the very large question of the attitude of the Church towards the Woman's Movement was first brought prominently before the attention of the general public in connection with the comparatively unimportant matter whether or not women

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should be permitted to preach in consecrated buildings during the National Mission. But the opposition to the proposal, or rather the motive of the opposition and the grounds on which it has been based in many quarters, has raised this *comparatively* unimportant question of women preachers into a test case, and on the attitude taken up by the Church towards this test case will depend its whole future relation to the women of the younger generation.

Many of these regard the prohibition of women as such from taking any official part in the delivery of the Christian message in a consecrated building as a slight and insult to the sex, and as a denial to woman, because she is a woman, of the full rights of human personality. It may be that those who take this view are mistaken; it may be that there are deep and solid and fundamental reasons why women should not preach, and that no right is infringed because no right exists. If so, a great responsibility rests on the leaders of the Church. If reasons exist let them be produced; let their cogency be demon-

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strated ; let the Church make patent and plain to all the world that a disability, the continuance of which in the present age seems to many an injustice and a slight, is really no such thing. It is not sufficient to quote precedents and rules. Those precedents were established, those rules were made, in reference to conditions which have passed away. In the semi-Orientalized seaports of the Levant the rulings made by St. Paul were necessary and good. It does not follow that they are so in London to-day. They may be ; they may not be. Argument, not precedent, is here required. It is the spirit not the letter of St. Paul that counts, and that spirit is a spirit of liberty. Either it must be shown that no grievance exists, or that grievance must be done away with ; and that, not only for the sake of the parties aggrieved, but for the sake of the moral credit of the Church in the eyes of the world. So long as there exists in any Church any open sore based on an unrefuted belief in injustice or an unexamined sense of slight felt by a large number of its members, that Church may cry aloud to a society

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torn with the dissensions of class and class its gospel of justice, of peace, and mutual understanding, but it will cry in vain.

Building the Tombs of the Prophets

The Church of England is fond of repenting of the sins of former generations and congratulating itself on the change from the bad old days. "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, Wesley and Newman need never have left the Church. If we had lived in the days of our fathers we should have recognized in the great scientific movement of the last century, not an enemy to be fought, but an heroic passion to give up all for truth's sake closely akin to the following of Christ. If we had lived in the days of our fathers we should have seen at once in the onward march of democracy not a danger to Establishment but the effort to recognize in practical politics the Christian principle of the value of the individual personality."

All these movements contained in them one-sided emphasis, unbalanced

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enthusiasm, positive error, mixed up with their idealism and fundamental righteousness and truth. But our fathers saw only the errors and the extravagances, they were blind to the goodness and the truth—and bitterly we reproach them for it. We lift up our voices and lament that great movements, which might have been guided, sobered, and enriched by the Church, which would in return have infused into the Church itself new life, new energy, and wider vision, should have been driven into an attitude of hostility or contempt—to the grievous detriment of themselves, of the Church, and of the nation at large.

We reproach our fathers, we study the biographies of the men they rejected, we write monographs on the movements they despised. We build the tombs of the prophets—and by that very fact, like the Jews of old, we show ourselves to be the true descendants of our fathers, blind like them to the life of the present, having like them eyes fixed only on the glories of the past, enthusiastic to acclaim the merits of any movement provided it has ceased

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to move, and to appraise the insight of any prophet provided he is long since dead.

Shall we make "the Great Refusal"?

All over the world the last quarter of a century has seen the rise in many forms of what is known as the "Woman's Movement." Some of its outward manifestations have been foolish, extravagant, anarchic. These are the features which afford choice materials for the sensational and the comic press. But fundamentally it is an endeavour to assert in a practical form, under the changed conditions of modern civilization, the fundamentally Christian principle that the personality of woman is not a thing of inferior value to that of man.

In the face of this world-wide movement what is the Church going to do? Are we going to meet it with suspicion and derision, as our fathers met Wesley or Newman, as they met Huxley and Darwin or the leaders of the Labour Movement? Already through the errors of the past, through the lack of a little sympathy,

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a little power of adaptation, a little readiness to sacrifice tradition—half the religious passion of the country, most of its intellect, and the majority of the working classes have been alienated from the Church—to their loss and to ours. Are we going to repeat the same old mistake, are we going to drive the younger women from the Church—women who will be the mothers and the teachers, the women who will set the social tone of the next generation, of men as well as women?

Our fathers made great mistakes, but if we, having their mistakes as an example and a warning, nevertheless repeat them, our stupidity and our guilt will be double. We have not their excuse. There was much excuse for those who felt, on the first appearance of the new Science, that the foundations of the faith were shaken—they were mistaken, but it was a pardonable mistake. There was some excuse for a Church, the bulk of whose leaders were out of contact with the masses in the large towns, misunderstanding the Labour Movement. But there can be no shadow of excuse for a failure to realize the im-

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portance or to misconceive the meaning of the Woman's Movement.

And there is another difference between then and now. The thinkers and the working men who left the Church in the days of our fathers, though generally men whose loss both for their own sakes and for the Church's has been very great, were often men whose interests were fundamentally intellectual or political rather than religious. The women in connection with whom this test question of women preaching has arisen to-day are women whose main interest is religious. Again, in some cases, especially in earlier days, the men who left the Church were men who claimed a "liberty of prophesying" incompatible with the quieter form of worship which better met the spiritual needs of the majority. But no wild "liberty of prophesying" is being claimed to-day. It is not suggested that *any* woman who considers herself fitted should, on *any* occasion she chooses, be permitted to address the congregation. It has only been asked that the permission should be given to women duly licensed by the

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Bishop and specially invited by the incumbent. In some manifestations of the Woman's Movement there may have been an element of anarchy and extravagance. It has not shown itself in this connection.

Marriage, Parentage, and Divorce

The most vital question of all remains. A few words will suffice to indicate its nature and its urgency. The Woman's Movement is bringing to the fore various moral problems that arise in connection with sexual relations in general, and with the ideals of marriage, of parentage, and of family life. In particular, questions like that of divorce or the control of the birth-rate are pressing for solution. These are of absolutely fundamental importance to the material, moral, and religious future of the race. Traditional ideas and usages on all these questions are being subjected from all sides to a vehement criticism, but more especially among women. New knowledge and changed economic conditions have raised questions which did not

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exist for our fathers, and have raised old questions in a new form.

Never was there a time when the world had more need of clear-sighted, sane, and sober guidance, and what is the Church going to do? It is a testing question; for where grave moral issues are at stake the Church must either abdicate or take the lead. It may be that to the most important of these questions the old answers are the right ones. If so, they must be proved to be so by new arguments, which will convince and secure the support of an intelligent and active public opinion. It may be that in some ways and to some extent traditional ideas may require modification. If so, it is vital to find the right extent and limits of that modification. In any case, it is clear that the whole future of humanity depends not only upon the right solutions to these questions being discovered, but no less upon its being found possible to commend the right solutions when found in such a way that men and women will be ready to regard them as principles binding in actual practice.

In this matter there is one thing which

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is certain, and there is one thing which is problematic. The thing that is certain is that women will insist on being consulted, and that the attitude which the women of a country take up will mainly determine the solution reached. The thing that is problematical is whether the Christian Church will be consulted, and how far its ideals will have any effect whatever in determining the actual practice of the great majority. Convocations may pass resolutions, and bishops may make pronouncements, but whether the Church will in practice be able to influence the issue will depend entirely upon whether it can retain the respect, the confidence, and the affection of its women members in the coming generation.

The Younger Generation

The Church has largely lost its hold on the men of the nation, it has been so far rather more successful with the women. But this is changing before our eyes. The younger women of this generation are going the way of the younger men of the

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last. Women tend to be both more conservative and more revolutionary than men. In matters of social customs and ideals of life they are slower to change, but when they do move the change is far more rapid and complete. The drifting of men away from the Church has been a slow continuous process lasting over fifty years or more, and there are signs that it may have reached its limit, and that if the Church can only rise to the problems of the day—intellectual, moral, and social—a reaction will set in. But among the younger women we see clearly the beginning, not of a drift but of a landslide.

The older generation of women, except in social and domestic matters, were usually content to follow the lead of men. The significant fact of the present day is that in Politics and in Thought women have found women leaders.

And if these are to lead them within the Church, still more if they are to lead any back to the Church, it will only be to a Church where they feel that the proper claims of women are not despised.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING ORDER IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

By EDITH PICTON-TURBERVILL

[For permission to republish my articles thanks are due to the Editor of the *Nineteenth Century and After*. They appeared in the September and November 1916 numbers of that magazine though in a somewhat different form.—E. P-T.]

SYNOPSIS

Christian Freedom.

An Analogy.

Exclusion of Women.

Not in Harmony with Christ's Teaching.

It harmonizes with Mohammedan Thought.

The Demand for a complete Christianity.

Fuller Contribution of Women within the Church
will make for Completeness.

Christianity not yet a Reality to Christian Nations.

Living Faith is the Faith of Insight.

Progressive Apprehension of Truth.

The Society of Friends.

The Salvation Army.

No New Thought.

Why no Women Apostles.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING ORDER IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

EVERY century has had its movements which, though scorned by many, have filled others of its generation with bright hopes for the future, and as we study these movements, it is borne in upon us again and again that nearly all of them, though often failures from the point of view of the generation in which they flourished, did indeed pave the way for wider freedom and for larger hope. The century in which we live is no exception ; indeed there never has been a time when nations throughout the whole world were striving for a wider freedom so strenuously as at present. The struggle for what each nation looks upon as freedom has,

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in these days, taken a most terrible form in this devastating war. Whether the path to truest freedom can be found in such a way may, to some, be open to doubt. Certainly without true freedom the highest development of happiness is impossible. A well-known speaker and writer has deplored the fact that the modern cry is the right to happiness; if the statement is correct, let us rejoice, for if the people are now crying out for a *right* to happiness it is the most truly Christian cry the populace has ever raised. For what is happiness? Happiness surely consists in the highest development of every God-given power.

Christian Freedom

Freedom for the development of every talent entrusted by the Master, to be used in His service—a cry more truly Christian could hardly be uttered; therefore in this cry let us see the promise of a coming better order and take courage.

The power of the spirit of God in what is so often called the Woman's

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Movement, but which we would infinitely rather call simply a great movement, has yet to make itself fully manifest to the world. Day by day it is doing so while we hopefully wait for further developments. Already it is recognized — and it is a significant fact — that whereas man when filled with a passion for the welfare of others has manifested it chiefly in seeking to free the people from oppression of governments, class and Church, and so given an outward expression of the new life, already with women the new power has turned inwards towards the uplifting of the moral and spiritual life of the nation. Who would be bold enough to deny that both are needed? Yet the full power for that service to which women seem especially called is withheld from them by the Church.

An Analogy

The whole of ecclesiastical England was a short time ago stirred by the Kikuyu controversy. We are not now concerned with the controversy itself;

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what, however, does concern us is that the very great majority of people, including those who are convinced that the Bishop of Zanzibar adopted a narrow position, in another great issue stand side by side with him; for they hold the doctrine upon which his action is based. Discussions that arose through this controversy proved that there are still many who believe that the fullness of the grace of God can flow freely only through one channel—the channel of Apostolic Succession—not through all men filled with the spirit of God, but only through some men. Words almost fail to express the indignation of Free Church men and others at the thought that so great a blessing can be confined to so small a channel. Yet are we not face to face with the fact that almost every man and every woman holds a similar doctrine when they hold that full blessings conveyed by the ministry of the Church can be conveyed by man alone, and that in this ministry women can have no share. The belief is held not by ninety-nine out of every hundred, but by nine

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hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand, and held most tenaciously by those in the Christian ministry.

Exclusion of Women

John Gibson spoke too strongly—we hope he did—when he told us that the struggle for the recognition of the full liberty of women will be the bitterest and most relentless when women seek a wider service in the Christian Church.

“We are being driven,” he said, “slowly to recognize that the last strongholds of injustice to contend against will be the Churches.” There is here a substratum of truth, and though we can never foretell the future by relying on the history of the past it is impossible to shut our eyes to the fact that the Churches have not been pioneers of freedom. Mrs. Rendel Harris, a Quaker, and therefore accustomed to the ministry of women, reading a paper at a Conference some years ago, said: “There is one sphere of service, and that one the highest, from which in almost all religious com-

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munities woman is rigidly excluded. She may not preach the Gospel within the Church. She may have every qualification for doing so apart from the fact that she is a woman. She may be able, as was the late Frances Willard, to sway large gatherings. She may know her Bible in the original with critical accuracy—as do many well-known learned women. She may be full of faith and love, as swayed by the spirit as was John the Beloved, and yet the Gospel she may not preach.” Not only is the preaching of the Gospel forbidden to women, but in nearly every Church function or ceremony they are permitted little more than a negligible part.

A deeply impressive sight was witnessed lately by myself on Good Friday night in the ancient town of Assisi. In the early morning a recumbent figure of the dead Christ was carried down from the Cathedral to the Church of St. Francisco. Here in the dark and sombre church the peasants flocked throughout the day to kiss the feet of their Saviour. After sunset and before the rising of the moon

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a life-sized image—and a beautiful one—of the Virgin was also carried in procession from the Cathedral to the Church, for the mother had come to claim the body of her Son. The return procession was made in a silence that could be felt, for behind the Virgin was borne the body of Christ. Hundreds followed the bier in orderly procession, bearing lighted tapers, a wonderful scene, the flickering tapers alone lighting up the darkness of the night, yes, hundreds, but how strange—not a woman amongst them! Women in great numbers were amongst the crowd that lined the road to watch, but none were allowed to follow the Christ as they had so faithfully followed in days of yore. Men of every trade, every profession, every guild, following the Master; the women—who, we remember, were the only ones when He was on earth to remain faithful to the end—pushed away in the crowd and allowed no share in the great symbolic service of devotion to the Lord. How strange in the light of the simple Gospel story does this seem. A mere incident perhaps and yet symbolic,

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profoundly symbolic, of the way in which women have been relegated to a place in the service of God deeply opposed, we believe, to the teaching of Christ.

Not in Harmony with Christ's Teaching

Let us as Christians face the attitude of the Founder of our faith to women and their ministry, and then compare it with the attitude of the Church to-day. Is there not indeed a wide gulf fixed between the two? Women are prohibited from conducting the simplest of services within the walls of our Church. The reason why a woman could not lead an intercession service in Church, as given by a clergyman of the Church of England (who was by no means indisposed to permit it in his Church, but genuinely regretted his inability to do so) was *because the Church was consecrated*.

Mary was by Christ permitted to break the vase of precious ointment over His head. Abelard, writing of this matchless scene, says: "Judge thereby of

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the dignity of woman, by her the living Christ was anointed twice, ointment being poured on feet and on head; from her He received the unction of King and of Priest." It is true that many a Churchman will speak with much tenderness of the sacredness and dignity of womanhood; yet it appears that fundamentally their attitude of mind belies their words, else they could not be so disturbed at the thought of a woman leading an intercession service in a consecrated building. We cannot compare the attitude of our Lord and the attitude of the Church towards women fully here, suffice it to say that in Christ's attitude no trace can be found of relegating woman to the place she now holds in the Church of to-day, nor is there a single note in all His teaching of either class or sex distinction. There is no suggestion in any words uttered by Christ that women were to be excluded from the highest ministry. To women was given the first great Easter message of new life and power, given, let it be noted, that they might pass it on and instruct the

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other disciples. On that first Great Easter Day we cannot fail to note that women too were in the upper room where all the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, when the great commission was given, and that therefore those wondrous words that followed: "As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you. . . . Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained"¹ (John xx. 21-23), were spoken to the believing women as well as to the men. We are so familiar with the story of the woman of Samaria that we lose its significance; yet how revolutionary it is. For "according to Rabbinical teaching it were better to burn the precepts of the law than teach them to a woman." Yet, it is to a woman He reveals the great truth of His Messiahship. Christ's whole life and His teaching are a criticism of the traditions of the day in which He lived.

¹ All the members of the Fulham Conference on Confession and Absolution in 1901 agreed that these words were spoken not to the apostles alone, but to the whole Church, and that on the occasion of their utterance women were present as well as men.

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This needs to be far more fully realized if a true conception of His teaching is to be attained. The very fact that the story of His life and His teaching becomes familiar to us in tender years, when knowledge of the thought and traditions of the times is likely to be absent, is not without its danger, for we become familiar with His words and acts, not realizing how they challenged the religious thought of His time, or how they appeared to the people of His day. Thus as we read of His acts and His words we often fail to recognize their profound significance. To a woman who, in the estimate of the religious people of the day, was unworthy to know even the law, Christ reveals the Divine Truth of His Messiahship.

Those who study the ministry of women in the early Church of the first two centuries admit readily that they held a place in the Church ministry, from which by degrees as centuries advanced they were slowly expelled. Eastern traditions and prejudices were as hard to overcome as are our own, and the following of the example set by Christ yielded

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to Eastern tradition and Jewish prejudice. In the early Middle Ages once again there was a revival in the realization of the value of women in the ministry of the Church.¹ St. Hilda of Whitby ruled over a double monastery, and took her place in the Synod. Juliana of Norwich, and many abbesses greatly enriched Church thought and life.² Ireland was rich in

¹ Judging from the place given to them in signatures the great abbesses in England ranked in dignity below the bishops but above the presbyters (*presbyteri*) (*Women under Monasticism*, Eckenstein).

“It was not unusual in early Christian times for abbesses to rule over houses of men as well as of women. The abbess held the same rank as an abbot, she presided occasionally over important Church Synods, as the Synod of Whitby; within the monastery she exercised the power of a bishop and bore a crosier, it was only in mediaeval times that convents of women were placed under the jurisdiction of men, and the difficulties and dangers arising out of their position formed one of the most serious problems that saints like Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila had to face” (*Women of Cell and Cloister*, E. Rolt-Wheeler).

² “In Kildare the authority of the abbess probably superseded that of the bishop. Kildare preserved down to a comparatively recent period the double succession of abbot bishops and of abbesses, and what is more the annalists take care to record the names of all the abbesses as well as the abbots. This no doubt arose from the fact that at least in public estimation the lady abbesses of Kildare enjoyed a kind of primacy over all the nuns in

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such abbesses; and wondrously might this have been developed had not the stiling hand of ecclesiastical tradition, leaning on the literal acceptance of a few Biblical texts, deprived half the race of exercising and contributing in full measure to the Church the powers within them.

*It harmonizes with Mohammedan
Thought*

Behind all this it is impossible to be blind to one other factor that has contributed to the present state of affairs. The Bishop of Winchester boldly said some few years ago at the Church Congress that women have been oversexualized, and though we have no thought of entering into the wide subject of sex, a reference is essential to a statement boldly announced and profoundly true.

Is it not manifest by the fact that those of a certain calibre will speak of the

Ireland, and, moreover, were in some sense independent of episcopal jurisdiction, if, indeed, the bishops of Kildare were not to some extent dependent upon them" (*Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars*, Dr. Healy).

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“superfluous” women in any country where the female population exceeds the male? No matter what gifts, powers, capabilities these women are exercising for the good of the community, for the nation, they are classed as “superfluous” because they are not exercising the one function of physical motherhood, and unless this devastating war has the effect of awakening the spirit life of the nation we shall hear much more of it in the near future. In Canada there are four hundred thousand more men than women in the country—or were before the war—a disproportion so great that the comparatively small excess (proportionally) of women in England falls into insignificance; yet one never hears the cry of the problem of the “superfluous” man. Sympathy is claimed for him but never is he spoken of as superfluous. Surely this alone bears out the truth of the Bishop’s statement; the so-called “surplus” women in this country are surplus only to those who have no other ideal for woman at all, no other conception of her value to the State, apart from her relation to man as

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wife and partner in the physical creation of the race. We venture—but quite unhesitatingly—to stigmatize this as non-Christian if not distinctly anti-Christian thought; it harmonizes with Moham-
medan and Hindu conception—though not with Hinduism at its purest period. The coming order in the Church of God will be potent in bringing a completer and fuller type of Christianity to the world, simple, strong, shorn, we believe, of much hampering tradition and pagan thought.

It is impossible sometimes not to find oneself in the somewhat wearying position of the small child who is perpetually asking the question why? Why, if a woman is able and capable, and above all else spiritually fitted for certain service, may she not find a recognized and complete outlet within the ministry of the Church? Can the reply be simply because she is a woman? Then again we ask, is that answer worthy of one professing the Christian faith, and does any one really believe that such a reply will satisfy the present generation?

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The Demand for a complete Christianity

The age in which we live is crying for a Christianity that shall be far greater than it has been—and the spirit that prompts this cry comes from those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. It comes not from the materialist and Godless, but from those who are sufficiently spiritual to resent the offering of stones as bread. The essence of the Christian faith lies in no doctrine, precious though the fundamental doctrines are to the Christian Church; in no clear statement, even of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and Resurrection. The essence lies in the simple reflection of the mind of Christ, Himself the express image of God.¹ But the mind of the Son of God needs to be interpreted continually by the living voice, and the mind of God can be voiced to the world through no masculine medium alone, for as humanity is made

¹ It is noticeable that whenever, in the technical language of theology, the Son of God is spoken of as having become man, *homo* or *ἄνθρωπος*, the generic term, is always used, never *vir* or *ἀνὴρ*, meaning man in the purely masculine sense.

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in the image of God it is through the collective voice of humanity at its best that God speaks. Revelation is progressive, and we see in the Coming Order the advent of a completeness hitherto, on account of artificial restrictions and traditions, unrealized in the Church; for throughout the ages one half of humanity alone has been called to guide in thought the Church of Christ. At once we recognize the exceptions St. Catherine of Siena, St. Theresa, and others—but in the main man has reserved to himself the power to express fully to the world his conception of the mind of God, and in the aggregate woman has been told that to the world at large she can have no such message to give.

*Fuller Contribution of Women within
the Church will make for Completeness*

It is impossible not to spend some little time in wondering what power the Church would have to-day if the attitude of Christ had been truly followed; if women had been taught to think for

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themselves and their full development encouraged. For over nineteen centuries man has explained to woman what her ideal should be. The spectacle of a youth, or indeed of an aged and experienced man, declaiming from the pulpit to a congregation of women, who are thirsting for reality and life, his conception of woman's place and work and God's special message for her would perhaps draw a smile did it not rather incline us to weep. For behind it stands the tragedy of an incomplete message, an incomplete service in the Church of Christ. I think the world at large feels generally now with the Rev. G. S. Stewart, of Edinburgh, who said at a Conference not very long ago: "I am a little impatient of men's attempts to explain to woman her own nature and what ideal God means her to fulfil. For God is wont to reveal His ideal to those who shall wear it more fully than to those who stand by. No man, however far-seeing, knows what God's message to woman is so clearly as the woman who has heard that message and in humility received His call." On the few occasions

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when it has been possible for woman to overcome some of the artificial restrictions, and express in spite of them all her God-given qualities, the result has been so remarkable as to compel the belief that the Church would hold a stronger position as the true exponent of the Christian faith, would be more influential in the expansion of the Kingdom of God in the world than it is to-day, had the artificial barriers never existed. So long as woman is unable to give within the Church her conception of the Christian message, so long will the Church's message to the world be incomplete. The world in general says certain things cannot be, and it seems as though this has only to be said often enough to be believed.

The Christian Message not yet a Reality to Christian Nations

When we think of these things it is not strange that the Christian message has failed to grip the world, and also failed in becoming a reality to these nations professedly holding the Christian

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faith. So apparent a fact is this in social and national life, so frequently recognized and deplored by all schools of thought, that demonstration of it here is superfluous. We are indeed on difficult ground, and recognizing how readily we lay ourselves open to the charge of presumption, we would almost fain be silent. But silence no longer is possible; the time has come for a fearless setting forth of the faith that is within us—nay, it came long ago, but because of pigmy courage and pigmy faith,—for fear perhaps of what is worse to many than persecution, the fear of ridicule and scorn, tongues that might have spoken have been silent. The Christian faith as now presented necessarily fails in fullness of power; for completeness and perfection signify the union, be it in nature or be it in the realm of thought, of the male and female principles in perfect harmony and equality.

The Christian message can, we believe, only come with its full dynamic power when in the full expression thereof these two principles are united. Here, there has been failure in the past within the

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Church of Christ, a failure which must indeed be relegated to the past, for in the Coming Order we have the vision of woman standing in the Church of Christ, as elsewhere, side by side with man, uniting the two essential principles in the presentation in the faith, of truth, holiness, purity, for thus alone will fullness be found.

Living Faith is the Faith of Insight

The feeling that we are in these days on the threshold of a new apprehension of truth is almost universal, though all have not the vision of Nathaniel Hawthorne when many years ago he saw that its apostles would be women. Before this can be received the great twin facts of progressive apprehension of truth and progressive revelation must be accepted, not only academically but as a living reality to the soul. It is a sad but certain fact that nation after nation has been held back from growth by a blind following not only of tradition, but of incidental decisions of great minds who by their very great-

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ness have paralysed free and independent thought in those who followed them. Thoughts and ideals of past generations in the region of religion, as elsewhere, have been blindly followed. Tradition has held us in her paralysing grip. Faith to those who are *living* must be the faith of insight and not of tradition; where the two clash tradition must be banished from the hearts of those who know that through faith in Christ we are on an upward path. Thoughts of others have been reiterated and followed without making them truly our own. Ah! the pity of it, for it has introduced *slavery* into the realm of thought and creative activity. If we call ourselves followers of Christ, thoughts, feelings, instincts, whether inherited or not, must be submitted to Him and simply judged by the standard of His teaching alone. Progressive revelation has been too slowly and reluctantly accepted. We have dealt with emphasis on a wrong interpretation of the phrase "once for all" and of the statement that the faith was "once delivered unto the saints." Had a mis-

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taken interpretation of these words never obtained it might be that long ere this a more complete and vital Christianity had been presented to the world.

Progressive Apprehension of Truth

Every student of humanity will see that in the primitive rude stages of human existence certain parts or attributes of God are first perceived, later different aspects; that is, the "seeing" one,—the prophet—becomes cognisant of them as another veil of materialism grows thin and disappears. In the early stages of humanity's development more appreciation is given to God's attributes of strength and of might; the people possessing these attributes push themselves to the front, ushering in the stage of "might is right" which, to some extent, has passed, and which eventually must completely pass away. As civilization advances, admiration of force no longer has first place, and from the so-called "male" qualities—for be it noted no attribute of God can truly so be called

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—we are coming to lay greater value on the so-called “feminine” qualities. The strong attributes of God were over-emphasized; now we behold more clearly what Juliana of Norwich beautifully describes as the Motherhood of God, emphasizing the tenderness, gentleness, compassion which will not suffer her child to perish. Thus we have a clearer comprehension of the Father-Motherhood of God enabling our incomplete humanity to acquire a more perfect vision of the Godhead. The difference of sex can no longer affect the humanity which is coming as profoundly as it has done in the past.

It will not be *possible* for the thought to continue to obtain that a physical differentiation disqualifies one half of humanity from fullest service within the ministry of the Church of Christ; no longer will a physical attribute be allowed to sway the thought, far less the soul and spirit world; and looking back upon us as history, those of the Coming Order in the Church of Christ will, we venture to believe, surely look back with wonder

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and with pity at the dull earthiness of our limited life when difference of sex seemed the pervading thought. With the complete and equal union of the two great principles in the full service of the Christian Church, much that is unequal and unlovely will pass away. The unlikeness of man to God, his want of true sympathy shown in his criminal leniency to certain sins will surely, as woman *within* the Church has power to teach and to demonstrate her love for her sister, gradually be transformed into a more perfect reflection of the Godhead. Woman, with her sympathy for suffering which sometimes degenerates into weakness, will then more readily learn that she, would she be perfected, must, alongside with her sympathy, have within her "man's" sense of justice. Either man or woman alone presents a one-sided, imperfect Christianity, lacking just that power which Christianity in its fullness alone can give. Therefore it is that we are bold enough to say, put aside prejudice, tradition, and all that is not life, and cry out that woman, *not* because she craves for a wider sphere, but for the

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sake of what the Church is losing of genius, power, and inspiration by her exclusion, because the Church needs her, needs her for the completeness of the Church's message to a hungry world, must take her stand with man within the ministry of the Church of Christ.

The Society of Friends

The Society of Friends has ever seen that for spiritual work the qualities primarily needed are of a spiritual order; and who would be blind enough to hold that the spirit of God is given according to the sex of the recipient?¹ Spiritual

¹ Canon J. H. Browne condemned this "erroneous conception" at a Conference on Women's Church Work in 1911. In speaking of the admission of women into the diaconate, to which reference is made later on, he said: "The admission of women to the official ministry of the Church tends to restore the true conception of the Church as the spirit-bearing body of all the members of Christ, wherein there can be no distinction of sex, 'no male or female for all are one *man* in Christ Jesus,'" Gal. iii. 28. "*Theoretically,*" he continued, "we think of Church membership as resting on a spiritual basis, but in *practice* we suggest that sex has something to do with full and effective Church membership, for we admit to office in the Church (generally speaking) *only men*. Thus sex has come to be regarded as a disqualification for holding office in the Church."

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qualities are among those things unseen and eternal which cannot be dependent on physical differentiation, yet the Church is organized as though it were a fundamental doctrine that the spiritual qualities necessary to her work were the attribute of men alone. For many generations as members of the Society of Friends have met for corporate worship and waiting upon God, women have taken an equal share with men in delivering the message and in audible prayer. Women have equally with men voiced to the community their conception of the mind of Christ. We have already suggested that this makes for a higher moral standard; the fact is therefore not without significance in this connection that divorce is almost unknown in the Society of Friends. It is impossible not to feel convinced that in this matter the Friends have an enlightenment that other Churches have failed to receive.

The Salvation Army

There is a certain Christian body which we believe is generally admitted to have

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accomplished more than any other for the outcast; that has brought hope to those who had no hope, light to those who knew nought but darkness and despair. Not only by its living message but by its social work it has accomplished miracles in the regeneration of despairing and sin-laden souls. Has there been any greater regenerative force during the past fifty years than the Salvation Army? It is not without significance that the Salvation Army, which has achieved so much, was founded on the principle that for true Christian work the qualities primarily needed are of a spiritual order, and that here the question of sex finds no place. For no position whatever in the Salvation Army, including that of sole command, is a woman ineligible.

Men and women, with perfect equality, perfect freedom, work together as comrades for the extension of the Kingdom of God. It will be said by some that the methods of the Salvation Army have no weight with them at all; yet are we forever to hold the thought that nothing can be learnt from other religious bodies?

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As it is hard to believe that any true foundation exists in Christian teaching for the exclusion of women from the ministry of the Church, it is not surprising to find that when they co-operate equally with men in spiritual work the result is a great regenerative power. If this once be admitted, and it be admitted that efficiency and spiritual qualifications are not lacking in women, the fact that the Churches have continued for so long in their attitude seems an illustration of the degree to which prejudices are powerful to dominate even high and noble minds, an illustration of how a wrong and non-Christian thought, once given utterance with sufficient emphasis and frequency as a Christian one, can be handed down from generation to generation, and passed as true, though it has no foundation in Christ's teaching, and has never within the Church been submitted to a truthful test.

Francis Bacon¹ with his wisdom is able to explain how this can come to pass: "We copy," he says, "the sin of our first parents while we suffer for it. They

¹ Preface to *Historia Naturalis*, Spedding's translation.

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wished to be like God, but their posterity wish to be even greater. . . . For we will have it that all things *are* as in our folly we think they are, and not as seems fittest to the Divine Wisdom, or as they are to be found in fact. . . . We clearly impress the stamp of our own image on the creatures and works of God, instead of examining carefully and recognizing in them the stamp of the Creator Himself. If, therefore, there be any humility toward the Creator . . . any love of truth, we must entreat men again and again to discard, or at least to set apart for a while, these volatile and preposterous philosophies which have preferred these to hypotheses, led experience captive, and triumphed over the works of God."

Not a New Thought

The inclusion of women in the ministry of the Church is no new thought, to us it appears but the true development of early Christian teaching. The place of women in the early Church has been set forth in various books on the subject. Yet suffi-

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cient study has not yet been given to this important matter. It is on the whole an unwritten chapter of Church history; there are, however, indications that when serious historical research is made, it will, to the surprise of many, strengthen the position which we hold.¹ Here we merely refer to the historical aspect, leaving the subject to each individual for further study. We do not dwell upon it, for though what has been said seems a clear development of early Christian thought, let it be remembered that much may come to us as a Divine message in these days, unrealized in days gone by. Bishop Westcott tells us that "when a truth is once enunciated it is often neglected and lies dormant for a time waiting to be brought out of the treasury of the Christian faith at some crisis which it is fitted to meet." That crisis is with us now. The eternal truth that men and women should work together for the extension of the Kingdom of God was plainly enunciated by Our Lord's attitude to women.

¹ See article on "Women Preachers" in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, December 1916.

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The great truth has lain neglected through the centuries, but now, we believe, by the spirit of the living God to be brought out of the treasury of the Christian faith, to be made a reality in Christian life. Not only is it no new thought, for in practice also it is not new; in America there are no less than seven thousand ordained women ministers in the Free Churches.

Why no Women Apostles

It has been said—and as far as I know this is the chief reason given by those who go not with us—that Christ numbered no woman amongst His twelve apostles. This is easily understood by those cognisant of the manners and customs of the East; for it was not only then but still would be impossible in some Eastern lands for women to travel as the apostles were called to do, to take the glad tidings throughout the world. We see again and again how our Lord, while enunciating eternal principles, conformed to the customs of the day. Customs, however, pass away while eternal principles remain. The great

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eternal message of the Christian faith has been the incalculable value of every human soul and its call to perfect unfettered service and to freedom. Were the faith that is within us not so strong, it would indeed be depressing to think how much time both men and women have spent, and will yet have to spend, in merely establishing the simple message of woman's right to freedom and complete service. Christ throughout His ministry proclaimed it. It was emphasized on the great birthday of the Church, the ever memorable day of Pentecost; for it is impossible to read Acts i. 14 to Acts ii. 16-18 without seeing quite clearly that the gift of the Spirit fell upon *all* the disciples. We are expressly told that the women were assembled with the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts i. 14), and in the next chapter—there should be no break—that the cloven tongues sat upon them *each* and the Holy Spirit filled them *all*. That in our Communion Service the preface to Whit Sunday directly infers that the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles only, appears to be an example of the preconceived

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ecclesiastical mind rather than a proof that the apostles alone received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The reading in Acts i. and ii. is perfectly clear, and there seemed to exist little thought of excluding any from the ministration of the Church when St. Peter and all the disciples saw in it the fulfilment of the prophecy, "*This is that* which was spoken by the prophet Joel . . . on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts ii. 17-18).

CHAPTER III
THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER

By EDITH PICTON-TURBERVILL

SYNOPSIS

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CHAPTER III

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The Attitude of St. Paul

THERE will be not a few to whom considerations such as those we have brought forward may appear cogent, but who feel that the question has been foreclosed by the pronouncements of St. Paul. To such we would reply :

(1) If St. Paul is to be quoted he can be quoted on both sides. "Let your women keep silence" (1 Cor. xiv. 34) can be balanced by "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head" (1 Cor. xi. 4).¹ If St. Paul does not here recog-

¹ In the injunction given that women are not permitted to speak, Dr. Dearmer, with many others (*The Guardian*,

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nize both the fact and the right of women to pray and prophesy, *i.e.* preach, in the primitive Churches, his language has no meaning at all so far as we are able to see.

(2) It is remarkable with what persistency the Church and people in general are prepared to insist on literal application of texts in certain cases and absolutely disregard them in another. That women should keep silence in Church has been very literally insisted on down the ages, and still is often quoted as though it disposed of the whole question. In the very same passage St. Paul distinctly tells us that for a man to pray with his head covered dishonours his head, yet in many a Catholic Church a clergyman, quite complacently, quite unashamed, quite regardless of St. Paul, will pray with his head covered wearing a biretta, and no one

July 20, 1916) are firmly persuaded that it was merely intended as admonition to too eager women not to chatter and disturb by making running comments on the sermon. Whether this was what St. Paul meant or not who will ever decide? The fact that Liddell and Scott give, amongst other meanings to the word *balaiz*, *to babble*, *to chatter*, certainly suggests that this interpretation may be the right one.

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comments upon it at all as violating a Divine law.

Instructions to Corinthian Church not of Universal Application

(3) It is essential to remember that the advice on the deportment of women in public given by St. Paul to the Church of Corinth was advice called forth by bitter experience of the vagaries of a Church which, as his letters clearly show, was exceptionally undisciplined, unmannerly, besides being tolerant of drunkenness, even at the Lord's Supper, and of the gravest moral lapses—as indeed was only to be expected in a society recruited from the slums of a city whose very name was a byword, even in that corrupt epoch, for the paradise of a dissolute life.¹ It is noteworthy that, while St. Paul gladly accepted pecuniary assistance from the Churches of Macedonia and later of Colossae, he did not do so at Corinth; which suggests that

¹ The verb *κορινθιάζεσθαι*, formed from the name of the city, was used in Athenian slang as the equivalent of "to commit fornication."

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he had always felt this Church to be one of the most difficult to deal with and requiring very careful management. It also has to be noticed that the instruction is not even a *general* instruction for the time in which St. Paul lived. In writing to Corinth he distinctly says: "Let *your* women keep silence"; knowing what Corinth was, this is understandable. But for aught this passage teaches to the contrary, Christian women in Philippi might do what the Corinthian women were forbidden to do. An *obiter dictum* called forth by the special circumstances of a Church so situated gives no indication of the line St. Paul would have adopted in the entirely different circumstances of the Church of England at the present day. That can only be inferred from his general attitude towards women. It is impossible to go in detail into the whole question of St. Paul's attitude towards women. Yet the study would be a fruitful one. In Greek the words he uses concerning them convey no subtle suggestions of inferiority such as have crept into our translations. Phoebe, whom

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St. Paul speaks of in Romans xvi. 1, is in our translation spoken of as “a servant of the Church that is at Cenchreae.” The word St. Paul used in describing her is *διάκονος*, precisely the same word as is used in 1 Cor. iii. 5: “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos but ministers, *διάκονοι*, by whom ye believed?” Again “in all things approving ourselves as the ministers, *διάκονοι*, of God,” 2 Cor. vi. 4. St. Paul uses the same word in reference to himself as he used in reference to Phoebe.

It is quite clear that Phoebe was one gifted by the Holy Spirit for publishing the glad tidings, or preaching the Gospel. One of the meanings of the word *διάκονος* doubtless is servant, and to serve is an honourable calling, but why is it that the translators, when interpreting it for men, used the word ministers, when for women, the word servant? Could it be that unconsciously the thought presented itself to them, that to apply the same word minister to a woman, thus bringing her on the same level as themselves, would be an anomaly, so refuge was found in the word

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servant with its suggestion of inferiority when the term applied to a woman? ¹

An unprejudiced student of St. Paul's attitude towards women can only, we believe, come to the conclusion that women in his time held a place in Church ministry which is withheld from them to-day. Moreover, the student of the whole subject in the New Testament will, we think, come to the same conclusion. We readily admit that isolated verses can be quoted with equal appearance of finality on both sides. In great living questions it is an intellectual and spiritual error to take a text here and a text there and found upon them a principle of life. A quotation here from Mrs.

¹ In the Church of England the order of Deaconesses was revived by Bishop Tait in 1862. The functions of a deaconess do not seem very clearly defined, and although they have been trained their work does not seem to be much different from that of a parish worker or district visitor. It is definitely stated that they do only the work given them by the parish priest, and are responsible to him for it. There seems to be a dearth of able and efficient candidates. This is not so remarkable as it appears, when we reflect on the opinion held by the majority of parish priests as to what is, and what is not fitting for a woman to do who is engaged in Church work.

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Bramwell Booth, who has had experience as perhaps no one else has had, of the religious ministry of women to both men and women, will not be out of place: "If commentators had dealt with the Bible on other subjects as they have dealt with it on this, taking isolated passages, separated from their explanatory connections, and insisting on a literal interpretation of the words of our Version, what errors and contradictions would have been forced upon the acceptance of the Church, and what terrible results would have accrued to the world! There is no end to the errors in faith and practice which have resulted from taking isolated passages, wrested from their proper connections, or the light thrown upon them by other Scriptures, and applying them to sustain a favourite theory. Judging from the blessed results which have almost invariably followed the ministrations of women in the cause of Christ, we fear it will be found, in the great day of account, that a mistaken and unjustifiable application of the passage, 'Let your women keep silence in the

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Churches' has resulted in more disaster to the Church, evil to the world, and dishonour to God than any of the errors to which we have already referred." Although persuaded that St. Paul's teaching on the whole harmonizes with our Lord's, let it be again affirmed, even at the risk of being thought tedious, that it is upon the plain teaching and attitude of Christ Himself that a plea is being made for a reconsideration of the whole question.

Ecclesiastical Tradition

Bishop Creighton reminds us, in *The Church and the Nation*, that men of Wycliff's day were not content with being told that doctrines or ceremonies were the traditions of the Church, they asked for the grounds of these traditions, *they demanded proof of their agreement with the words of the Church's Divine Founder.* That Divine discontent is with us still. The teaching and tradition of the Church is contrary to the full inclusion of women within its ministry,

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it has yet to be shown that it is contrary to the teaching of the Church's Founder. Church tradition is, we are well aware, no mere report and has its weight, which must not be ignored, yet it cannot be considered final unless it can be proved to be in agreement with the words of Christ. And conviction comes to many that on this point, the relative importance of tradition and the teaching of Christ, as on many others, women will contribute to the Church what the Church so greatly needs: greater simplicity in thought-life, which will bring us into an atmosphere more remote from tradition, a clearer atmosphere in which true and vital things will be more clearly seen. Intuition is of great value to the Church, and in this direction women have a contribution to make which can only be fully made where freedom prevails for them to give to Church life what in them lies. It is not to be supposed that women alone have intuitive power, yet it is the common belief that they possess it more generally than men; and there is little that would contribute more profoundly to the

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spiritual life of the nation than a wealth of consecrated intuitive power perfectly developed within the Church of Christ. Women may not be thoroughly versed in ecclesiastical precedent or law, yet the loss may not be so great as it at first sight appears. In the history of the Church can be found more disasters due to the rigid insistence on precedent than to an over-readiness to experiment.

The Past Educative, not Final

It is just because the woman's mind will probably be a non-ecclesiastically trained mind that new life and fresh air may be brought into Church life. History will not be ignored and the past forgotten, but there is reason to believe that a new power to regard the past as *educative* rather than *final* will then find a more vigorous place in Church life. It is almost impossible for the ecclesiastically trained mind to realize how profoundly earnest lay people resent certain attitudes of mind adopted by the Church concerning vital things, so continually standing as

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she does for just the accepted standards in morality, custom, and thought. Not for a moment is it to be supposed that the inclusion of women within the full ministry of the Church would alter all this, but it would bring in a new spirit of which the Church is in sore need. Not spirit apart from form but spirit within form, uplifting and transforming it.

*Woman's full Contribution should be
within the Church*

The Church exists for the purifying of the world, for the extension of the Kingdom; since it has been found that when men and women work together in spiritual equality a great regenerative force is, as it were, let loose, is it possible that the Churches will allow tradition, and "what has been" to weigh at a time like this more mightily than truth verified by practice. There is a certain parish where Sunday after Sunday, year in year out, nonsense is proclaimed from the pulpit. So strong a statement is made with extreme reluctance, yet in this case it is

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the only one truthfully to describe the situation. To that parish came some few years ago, for the week-end, a woman of peculiar holiness and beauty of character. She is living still, and her name would probably be known to many of my readers. She has done a great work in the city in which she lives, and is popularly known as the Guardian Angel of that city. Her presence is a benediction, and when she speaks on spiritual things seems to lift her hearers into the very arms of God. The ardent desire for her to be allowed to speak in the Church at the Morning Service was openly expressed. It could not be. True she could speak in a parish room, a barn, a stable, but why no room for her in the Church? No room in what should be the spiritual home of the people, no room within the walls of the Mother Church.

The Coming Order

We believe that ordained women should have a place in the ministry of the Church in a far wider sense than they

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have to-day and as wide a sphere of service as is open to men. That belief, we are aware, will be ridiculed by some, held too preposterous for discussion by others, and we do not, we think, claim too much when we affirm that we are already well aware of the reasons that will be given by those who cannot see eye to eye with us in this great question. There will be travail and pain in giving birth to this Coming Order. All those who are clinging—and few indeed are guiltless here—to accepted standards simply because they have been long accepted, an attitude which, though devoid of life, carries with it, as some one has graphically said, “the terrible resistive power of the *status quo*,” as well as those who, apart from this position, cannot see with us, these will stand in great array, as a mighty army, to bar the path that we are convinced will lead to a fuller life for the Christian Church.

Truth at first sight may not always be beautiful, and for the comfort of those who dread what to them seems fraught with danger and possible ugliness, it is

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encouraging to call to mind the following lines of Oliver Wendell Holmes :

The time is racked with birth-pangs ; every hour
Brings forth some gasping truth, and truth new born
Looks a misshapen and untimely growth,
The terror of the household and its shame,
A monster coiling in its nurse's lap
That some would strangle, some would starve ;
But still it breathes, and passed from hand to hand,
And suckled at a hundred half-clad breasts,
Comes slowly to its stature and its form,
Calms the rough ridges of its dragon scales,
Changes to shining locks its snaky hair,
And moves transfigured into Angel guise,
Welcomed by all that cursed its hour of birth,
And folded in the same encircling arms
That cast it like a serpent from their hold !

Does not experience of life bear out this truth ? It will indeed be sad if in a time like this, when, as the Archbishop of Canterbury has so lately reminded us, whether we like it or not, things will have to be reset, replanted, the Church should be slow or reluctant to think anew upon this question. "Our Mission message then is a solemn call to rehandle in the Name of Christ, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of Truth, standards,

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customs, ways of common and corporate life which have for years and years been satisfying us too easily. We are going to bring our complacency to the touchstone of what Jesus Christ did and taught on earth." Brave words, filling many with hope; action needs to follow if in our national life this is to become reality. It is to be feared that within the Church there may still be a great refusal to make this brave attempt, still a lack of desire to test all life, corporate as well as individual, by that one standard.

*The Voice of God speaks not only in
"authorized" and expected ways*

To this thought the Church herself has given no corporate expression, and for this reason many will even refuse to consider what appears to them so chimerical an idea. Yet for a sympathetic consideration at least we plead. It is surely not too much to ask that the whole subject should be thought out afresh. Customs and traditions are always with us and serve their purpose, yet where

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faith is living, and Christianity real, they need to be continually challenged to see if they harmonize with the mind of Christ. To refuse to do this is surely sin, the very sin committed by the Jews of old. Their greatest sin was not that they crucified the Lord of Glory; that even was forgivable; the sin of the nation was that they had made such an idol of authority that they could not consider as possible a revelation coming from any other source. By the idol which they had made of authority they had literally lost the power of recognizing a Divine act when they saw it, or a Divine word when they heard it, unless it was done or spoken under such auspices as they expected and desired. The Christian Church is in danger of committing that great sin, we fail to hear the voice when it comes from an unexpected quarter; often we cannot, for like them of old, bound by prejudice and tradition, we recognize the Voice only when it comes in an expected and authorized way. If ever there was a time when the unexpected is happening, it is now. If ever it was needed for mankind to

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have his spirit so attuned that any whisper of the Divine should reach his soul, it is now. The rays of light may come from any quarter. This we believe is a ray which, faint though it is, will lead to fuller light.

If any reader finds in his or her heart or mind some response to the thoughts here expressed,—if a whisper, be it only a whisper, comes that, heterodox though it all *sounds*, truth is fundamentally here to be found; then we plead with such a one to face facts anew, as they now are, the needs of the world anew as they now obtain, and, realizing that past ideals were for past conditions, seek to hear the voice of the Living God speaking to-day. So only can the faithful student of Truth reach the Highest Life. Should conviction come that this fuller ministry of women is the need of the Church of Christ, the call to some service to bring it to pass, and obedience to that call alone can lead to fuller and more perfect life.

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Courage and Faith

Who are we, it will be said, not to be content with the presentation of a Christianity which has satisfied holier and better men than we are, and has stood the stress and storm of centuries? The temptation to feel thus—for temptation it surely is—comes again and again with paralysing result. It is not of faith. No thought has been so potent as this in hindering those who have seen a glimmer from faithfully following on. Men of vision, who, if the vision had been followed, would have stepped out into a life of marvellous faith and power, have yielded to the influence of that subtle and paralysing question. It is powerful for evil because so subtle, powerful because it has an appearance of humility; yet no true humility is here, and the one who yields to the power of the thought sinks into an impotency, the more mournful in that the vision having been vouchsafed, violence has been done to a God-given intuition of the soul. The world wants faith that is a reality, not merely talked about, but

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acted upon, and sure it is that faith comes when in a critical moment we dare to act on some intuition of the soul. Faith rises in its most dynamic form when at some inmost vision souls dare to take what appears a fatal leap, a leap which, however once taken, lands them into a kingdom of new power.

CHAPTER IV
WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY
By B. H. STREETER

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CHAPTER IV

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Not merely a Question of Woman's Rights

THAT the question of women taking their part in the work of the Christian ministry should come to be regarded *merely* as an aspect of the "Woman's Rights" question—important as it is in that regard—would be most disastrous. In the Church of Christ shepherds are there to feed the sheep, not to enjoy some coveted distinction; and preachers exist to preach the Gospel, not to secure their personal rights. But the question must seriously be raised whether the fullness and many-sidedness of the Christian message are ever likely to be adequately presented to the world by a Church in which women are excluded from pastoral and preaching activity.

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The Worship of the Virgin Mary

In an earlier chapter of this volume it has been urged that the Divine Personality cannot and ought not to be thought of as being either male or female, but as something transcending and including all that is best and highest in the typical characteristics of both sexes. The capacities of the human imagination are to a large extent determined by human experience, and the conception of a supra-sexual Divine Person is not at first an easy one to grasp. In an uncivilized or semi-civilized epoch the only possible way to do this has been to conceive of the Divine as manifesting itself in different personalities of opposite sexes. This, surely, is the meaning and—at a certain stage of culture—also the justification of the worship of the Virgin Mary.

The Virgin Mother embodies the ideal of womanhood perfect in its two highest aspects—motherly tenderness and absolute purity—aspects only incompatible where a low ideal of marriage prevails. As such, throughout two-thirds of Christen-

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dom she occupies, in popular devotion if not in technical theology, a position of virtual divinity alongside the divinity of the Divine Man. This development was not only facilitated by the intellectual incapacity of a primitive age to conceive of the Divine as supra-sexual, it was no less a result of the effort of the moral and religious instinct of the Church to recover or retain its belief in the Divine tenderness—a belief which could not but be obscured by the emphasis commonly laid on the function of our Lord as the destined Judge of the world,¹ and the preoccupation of Latin Christianity with the terrors of Purgatory and Hell. In the gallery at Brussels there is a famous picture by Rubens, representing our Lord armed with thunderbolts swooping down in wrath upon a world covered with smoking cities, while Our Lady and St. Francis stretch forth their hands in sup-

¹ Cf.

Along my earthly life, the thought of death
And judgment was to me most terrible.
I had it aye before me, and I saw
The Judge severe e'en in the Crucifix.

The Dream of Gerontius.

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plication appealing to the raging Christ to have mercy on mankind. Such a picture throws a flood of light on popular religious teaching, and shows that in an age when the predominant characteristic of God the Father and God the Son was justice,¹ and when justice itself was interpreted in terms of a vengeance bound to the exaction of the uttermost penalty, few men could approach God direct in the spirit of love and trust and confidence in which Christ bade men approach their Heavenly Father. But before the image of the Divine Mother all men could lay aside their fear and could approach the Divine conceived as Mother with that "boldness and access with confidence" which St. Paul (Eph. iii. 12) felt to be the essential consequence of faith in Christ.

I am not pleading for the revival of the worship of the Virgin. Mariolatry belongs to the mythological stage in the presentation of religious ideas. Probably the best possible means of securing the expression of a fully Christian conception

¹ In some Jesuit theologians Christ as King of Justice is contrasted to Mary as Queen of Mercy.

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of the Divine in an earlier age is one which Northern Europe has intellectually outgrown. And the maintenance or the revival of religious conceptions which are intellectually outgrown is apt to be accompanied by stagnation of moral insight. So far at least as the Church of England is concerned, it is precisely those who are loudest in praise of Mary who shudder at the very thought of women ministering in holy things; and a traditionalism which seeks to honour Womanhood in Heaven while dishonouring it on earth would appear to be not intellectually only behind the age. But for all that it may well be argued that the abolition of this symbolic representation of the element of tenderness in the Divine Personality has not been effected without loss. The God whom we have tended to worship has been the sternly just Deity of the Old Testament—a Being coming a long way short in many features of the God whom Jesus bade us call our Father, and whose essential nature is revealed to us in the life and character of the historic Christ.

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The Typical Excellences of the Sexes

I have spoken of certain virtues, and the insight and perceptions which go with them, as being typical of the two sexes, but such language ought only to be used with caution. There is nothing mutually exclusive or incompatible with one another in the typical virtues of man and woman; and the fact that we can speak of them as typical is probably largely the result of the very different training usually given, and of the very different ideals commonly held up to the two sexes. For centuries men have been taught to value chiefly the virtues of the citizen and of the sportsman—justice, veracity, courage. Women have been taught to put first the virtues of the home—loyalty, chastity, and tenderness. But in spite of all the efforts of all the centuries to differentiate the sexes morally and mentally, even more than physically, every one knows individuals who exhibit in a conspicuous degree virtues said to be typical of the opposite sex without losing those of their own. Courage is often

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conspicuously manifested by the female and sympathy and tenderness by the male. Physical differences, no doubt, have an emotional counterpart. Hence some virtues are more easy of attainment to the average man and others to the average woman. But that is no reason why each should not be trained and encouraged to achieve them all. "Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect" was not spoken only to one sex.

Christ the Synthesis of Male and Female Excellences

This union and synthesis of all the highest qualities, whether "typical" of the male or of the female, was obviously achieved in the character of our Lord. That is the real reason why Mariolatry is superfluous wherever the character of Christ, or His activity, past, present, or future, is not misconceived. It is precisely because in Him we see realized the perfection of the feminine virtues so called as well as of the masculine, that He can be to us, to use St. Paul's language, "the portrait of

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the invisible God." But the task of the Church is to bring this character, this "portrait of the invisible God," before mankind in such a way that they will vividly apprehend it and instinctively respond to it as a living reality. It is not enough to assert a doctrine, one must produce conviction that it is vital truth. This must be effected partly through preaching and teaching, partly by what is known in general as "pastoral" work. In practice no preacher preaches the whole Christ. No teacher or pastor can exhaustively convey the Christian message. He brings home to his hearers only those elements in the character, teaching, or work of Christ which he himself has really gripped. So long, then, as pastors and preachers all belong to one sex, and so long as the average man and the average woman have unequal though complementary susceptibilities to different aspects of the perfect life, the probability is that certain elements in the Christian ideal will be only incompletely realized, and therefore only inadequately represented in the teaching and preaching

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of the Church. The full splendour of the vision will not be realized, the whole meaning of the message will not be grasped, until women as well as men are allowed not only to gaze and ponder, but also freely to give to others what they themselves have found.

The Ministry of Women the Alternative to Mariolatry

The Catholicism of the Middle Ages was an extraordinarily successful attempt in relation to the circumstances of the time to make effective in thought and life the great principles of Christianity. But just because it was so admirably adapted to the circumstances of that age it is alien from an age whose social, political, and intellectual life is entirely different. But the attitude of mere revolt against the Catholic system which the political and sectarian animosities of the past have too long perpetuated is philosophically and religiously bankrupt. "Not to destroy but to fulfil" must be the motto of the Christianity of the future.

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Our task is not to revive ancient forms but the religious principles which those forms attempted to embody. We should look for progress not by seeking to restore the worship of Our Lady, but by seeking other ways to bring home to men those principles and ideas which the worship of the Virgin was a crude and by no means unsuccessful attempt to make real. The Churches which have repudiated Mariolatry have, it would seem, along with undoubted gain, also suffered loss—in practice if not in theory. But if so surely one of the ways of retrieving that loss will be to supplement the ministry of men by that of women, in order to secure that the element in the presentation of the Divine character which Mariolatry crudely presents to the popular imagination in symbol and myth, is effectively and continually presented by the living personality of the woman interpreter of the Gospel message.

It is a commonplace with advocates of foreign missions that different nations, like different individuals, have each the capacity for appropriating and fully real-

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izing and working out different aspects of this living faith. Westcott's remark, "Until India is converted we shall never know the meaning of St. John," is quoted and re-quoted by those who have the widest experience of the actual facts; and the principle is not by them applied to India alone. But surely if it is true that the combined insight and experience of all the different nations is necessary to enable the Church as a whole to understand completely the breadth and depth and height of the Christian revelation and the Christian life, still more true must it be that the fullest co-operation of the two sexes will be needed.

Practical Action—the First Step

To come now to the practical question: What ought the Church to do—now and at once? The first step is clear. At once, and without further delay, licences should be given to properly qualified women to preach and exercise the other functions entrusted to lay readers. Such licences should be given to women on

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exactly the same terms and conditions as those on which they are at present given to men. Petty restrictions, such as being debarred from the use of the lectern or chancel steps, or being permitted to speak to women only, would be felt to be as humiliating as they are intrinsically absurd.

The Shortage of Good Preachers

This would be a step of immense practical value, and it would raise none of those difficult questions with regard to the position and functions of the regularly ordained ministry on which it would be unreasonable to demand that the Church should make up its mind in a hurry. It would also meet a real need. Probably a majority of the parish clergy are called upon to preach at least two sermons and to give one less formal address every week of the year. Yet the multifarious duties of ordinary parish work make it very difficult for them to secure time for continuous reading and hard thinking. The inevitable result is that

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so far as preaching is concerned too many become thoroughly "stale." Hence the occasions on which a special preacher is brought in are commonly even a more welcome relief to the parson himself than to his congregation. But the supply of special and occasional preachers available would be enormously increased if licences to preach were given to the large and increasing number of educated women who have a gift for public speaking and are loyal members of the Church. Moreover, it is likely that the introduction of a fresh element would favourably react upon the preaching activities of those already licensed or ordained. "Fresh blood" is always stimulating, and the influx of a body of fresh and unwearied preachers, with new points of view or new ways of putting things, could not but have a favourable reaction on the activities of the whole Church.

There already exist a number of women who, on public platforms, in connection with various religious societies, on Pilgrimages of Prayer, etc., have shown themselves to be zealous and effective preachers,

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with real insight into things spiritual, and real power to inspire and convert. The supply of ordained ministers and licensed lay readers who have these gifts has not for years past been nearly sufficient to meet the demand. Why should the Church continue to shut its eyes to a source of strength so near at hand?

The Roll of Honour

There is a further reason why immediate action is to be desired. The Roll of Honour includes so many of the most promising of the younger men from the Universities, who would otherwise have entered the ministry, that the normal shortage of suitable men will be still further enhanced. Hence the problem of the supply of competent preachers is one which in the immediate future is likely to be more acute than it has ever been in the history of the Church. But this immediate future will be a time of crisis, trial, and opportunity. After the conclusion of peace there may confidently be

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anticipated a violent reaction from the overstrain of the war among the military and civil population alike. A general atmosphere of fatigue, disillusionment, and depression, added to the appallingly difficult problems of social and economic reconstruction following on demobilization, will create a situation in which the need for every one who will and can deliver a message of hope, consolation, and inspiration, will be greater than it has ever been before. It will be for the Church a moment of unprecedented opportunity, but also a moment of unprecedented peril. For the failure of the Church to supply in abundance persons with a real message to deliver and the power of delivering it will mean spiritual bankruptcy. Among the daughters of the Church there are fortunately not a few to-day who have both the message and the power to give it. We need their help. The present is not a time when the responsible leaders of the Church can afford to hesitate and to haver, to adjourn and reconsider, before taking so obvious a step as making

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available for urgent spiritual work great reservoirs of power hitherto untapped.

The question of the admission of women as preachers is the one which happens to have come most to the fore of late, and it is the one which can most easily be solved without delay. But there are other questions connected with the service which women can render to the Church which cannot be solved off-hand, and in regard to which immediate and unconsidered action might be harmful. But the fact that a problem is too large and too difficult for unconsidered action only makes it the more important that immediate consideration should be devoted to it.

Women and Pastoral Work

There is not only room, there is an urgent need for a pastoral activity of women, and this in many ways. Three only need here be specified.

(1) The question of imparting to the young the information on sex matters that is vitally necessary for their future

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well-being is one as difficult as it is important. Like most difficult questions it is one which the Churches have steadily refused to face. But the report of the Commission on Venereal Diseases from one side, and the discoveries of modern research into the origin of mental and nervous disorders from the other, have made it impossible for any Christian body which takes itself seriously, or expects to be taken seriously, as a moral force to continue this ostrich-like policy. What exactly should be done is a matter for grave deliberation, but it is clear that if the Church is to deal effectively with women and girls in this matter, it must work largely through the ministry of women.

(2) Whatever view may be taken of the general system of the confessional as it is actually worked in practice, it is clear that the Church has need of a body of persons specially qualified, and probably therefore specially trained, to give help and advice to persons who are troubled with moral, spiritual, and intellectual difficulties. The number of

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persons so troubled at one time or other of their lives is, I believe, far larger than is commonly supposed. The soul from time to time needs a doctor as well as the body—some souls, like some bodies, more often than others. But to women in many cases this kind of help can only or at any rate can best be given by other women.

(3) Nor is it only in cases where moral or intellectual difficulty is known and recognized that the guidance and inspiration of an experienced person is of value. Christianity does not aim merely at preventing evil. Its essential genius is to promote good. Teaching the real meaning of religion, helping to build up character, stimulating and guiding that sense of vocation which is the mainspring of the Christian life are a vital part of the pastoral work of the Christian ministry. Here again women can often do for women what no man, however experienced or sympathetic, can ever hope to do. Such work, of course, is being done and always has been done by countless women, but the definite "setting apart" of certain

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women for this special work would not merely be a source of strength and inspiration to them, it would also (what is even more important) make known to women needing help where they would be likely to find the help they looked for.

In the primitive Church there was an order of Deaconesses, and the name has been revived in modern times, but there is a considerable haziness in the general mind as to what is the exact position and function of those who at the present moment bear it. Possibly it is by an extension and development of the Order of Deaconesses that such problems as have just been indicated would best be dealt with. But if the name Deaconess be retained, the office and functions implied by it must be something much more important and much wider than is at present the case in the Church of England, and no suggestion must be attached that it implies a vow of celibacy.

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The Question of the Priesthood

The question of the admission of women to the priesthood is one which not only can, but one which ought to be indefinitely postponed. A Church which is really alive will be ever ready to recognize that in some particular point it is in danger of making the Word of God of none effect by its traditions. Still, an ancient and deep-rooted tradition of the Church has a claim to be treated with respect. The change of practice in question would be so grave a departure from tradition that it ought only to be made, if at all, after long and grave consideration; and it ought not to be made unless and until the great majority of members of the Church, both men and women, are convinced that it is desirable—and no one can pretend that this is at present the case.

And such a change of opinion in the Church would be possible if and only if certain other changes, with regard to all of which there are grave differences of view, have previously taken place. In parti-

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cular, three conditions must be fulfilled before the admission of woman to the priesthood would become a matter for serious discussion :

(1) A more democratic form of Church government must be established in the parish. (2) Not only inside but outside the Church there must be a considerable clarification of opinion on the whole question of the relations and functions in the community of the two sexes. (3) The Church of England must make up its mind what exactly is meant by Priesthood.

A more detailed discussion of these points will make this clear.

The Position of the Incumbent

(1) The admission of women to the Priesthood is most inadvisable unless and until a more democratic system of Church government has been introduced, and until this has been in existence long enough to have got pretty generally in good working order in the parishes. If women were admitted to the priesthood, it would

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mean that a woman would be qualified to be the vicar of a parish. This would be impossible so long as the incumbent has the autocratic position which he at present enjoys in the Church. The autocracy of the incumbent is one of the great weaknesses of the Church of England in a democratic age. But the laity have been so long accustomed to leave the management of Church affairs to the parson that, even after the legalization of Parish Councils, it will take some time to develop an active and intelligent public spirit, especially in country districts. Hence in practice the autocracy will for some years survive the appearance of Church Reform—and we have still to wait for Church Reform.

Where an abuse has been established from time immemorial, or where it is a survival of a practice which originally was not an abuse, English people have great patience in extending towards it a grumbling toleration. The autocracy of the incumbent is a case in point. But once suggest that the autocrat might be a woman, instead of a man, and the abuse

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becomes a novelty instead of a matter of immemorial custom, and no one would tolerate it. A democratic reform, therefore, of the Church system, involving the establishment of Parish Councils with statutory powers, and a period of transition during which those Councils may learn to use their new powers, must come first. It will then be possible to discuss the question of the woman priest on its own merits.

Sex in Public Opinion

(2) The subordination of women, which was probably necessary at an earlier stage of civilization, leads at the present day not only to the unjust and undesirable exclusion of women from many careers for which they are fully qualified, but also to an unnecessary accentuation of the sex difference which reacts in an unfavourable way on the relations between the sexes in general. Nevertheless it is quite possible that the modern reaction against the differentiation of professions according to sex may go

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too far. Men and women are not the same. As a rule they have a diversity of gifts, and although it is possible that individual and exceptional women may be found competent to fill any post which can be filled by men, it does not follow that it may not be in the interests of the community that certain professions should, in the main, be reserved for one sex and certain for the other.

That the objections to a woman's exercising the office of a priest depend on principles of permanent validity I am not prepared to urge. But it is, I think, plain that a society so large as the Church of England, and so representative of the national character, cannot have women as its principal officers until a considerable change in the position accorded to women has been accomplished in the public opinion of society as a whole. It is no doubt the business of the Church to be ahead of public opinion, not behind it, but in a matter of this kind it cannot be too far ahead. But if once it should become clear, not merely to a few individuals but to the Church as a whole,

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that women are not merely equal in rights of membership but also equally well qualified to exercise the functions, social, administrative, etc., as well as strictly religious, which the higher officials of the society are in practice called upon to exercise, then the duty of the Church in the matter would no longer be uncertain.

The Conception of the Office of Priest

(3) There remains to be discussed a far more difficult and controversial subject—the bearing of the conception of priesthood in the Church of England on the admission of women to that office.

The Oxford Movement, with its emphasis on the importance of the corporate side of the Christian life, laid much stress on the idea that the priest acts as the representative not merely of the congregation to which he happens to be attached, but also of the whole Church. Hence the importance attached to the Episcopate.

At the present time there is to be detected a growing division of opinion

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within the ranks of those who have been most strongly influenced by the Oxford Movement. On the one side are those who believe in what is sometimes called a "ministerial Priesthood," that is to say a Priesthood representative indeed of the whole Church, but deriving its powers and authority from the Church through the Bishops as being the official organ of the Church for the purpose of delegating those powers. On the other side are those who believe in what may be called a "magisterial priesthood," that is to say who affirm that the commission of our Lord to the Apostles was given to them, not as the representatives of the Church, but as an exclusive personal prerogative, to be handed on by them to the Bishops, their successors, so that the Church depends on the Episcopate not the Episcopate on the Church. Along with this conception of the authority of the priesthood goes a conception of the nature of the act of consecration of the Sacrament which, to those who do not share it, appears to be of a quasi-magical character.

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Now those who hold to the conception of a ministerial priesthood may or may not be prepared to admit women to the office, but at least they are not debarred from discussing the question on its merits. It is otherwise with those who hold the "magisterial" conception. This section, it may be anticipated, will be most reluctant to consent to the admission of women to the priesthood. No doubt it may be argued that, if the laying on of Episcopal hands can confer certain mysterious powers upon a man, in strict reason it might equally well do so in the case of a woman. But the belief that powers of this nature are conferred at all depends not upon reason but upon tradition, and tradition though it can be quoted in favour of the recognition of women as prophetesses cannot be quoted for their admission as priests. Again the appeal which such a belief makes depends psychologically on the attraction of the intrinsically mysterious to certain minds. But innovation of any kind is the enemy of the sense of the mysterious.

The number of the clergy who are

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definitely upholders of the "magisterial" conception of the priesthood is not easy to estimate, owing to the fact that on many controversial questions they can often command the overt support or at least the tacit sympathy of the moderate High Church party, who themselves incline to the conception of a ministerial priesthood. Among laymen the view has comparatively few supporters; but it has undoubtedly commended itself to a considerable number of women. Hence a strong opposition to the admission of women to the priesthood is likely to come from a considerable section of the women themselves—and so long as that is the case it is clearly impracticable to propose any change.

Let the Bishops act

The question of the priesthood is one which not only must but can wait. Preaching stands on an entirely different footing. From the days of Miriam and Deborah, the prophetess—the woman who can deliver a message with faith and

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effectiveness—has always been prominent in the Church of God, and to refuse to recognize this fact, or rather to fail heartily to welcome and encourage this activity, is plainly contrary to the teaching of Christ and to the custom of the primitive Church. May we not, then, appeal to the Bishops—many of whom have pledged themselves to take this vital matter into consideration at an early date—to act courageously and to act at once?

Progress and Tradition

There is a mischievous idea about that the one virtue required of a Bishop is that of caution and that the main function of the Office is to be the guardian of tradition. It *is* the duty of the Bishops to guard the treasures of the past, but it is no less their duty to look forward to the future. A Bishop is not a custodian of ancient monuments, he is a General in an army which should always be on the advance. Men picked out from the rest of the priesthood for their energy, ability, or experience;

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placed as it were upon a watch tower whence they can survey a field wider than is possible for the parish priest overburdened with the detail of parochial administration—they are the men to whom in times of crisis the Church has a right to look for direction and leading, they are the Order in the Church to whom is entrusted the task of so solving the problems of to-day that the problems of to-morrow may not be made insoluble. In a country so conservative as England, above all in a Church so saturated with historic memories, so cautious and respectable in temperament as the Church of England, the claims of the past may be left to take care of themselves. There *are* Christian bodies which are in danger of erring from too great a readiness to experiment, too little respect for the past. The Church of England is not one of these. Adaptability to changing needs, vision of future possibilities and future developments are what she most lacks. The peril of the Church of England is that like Lot's wife she may perish through looking back: and if we may

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not look to the Bishops to prevent this, where may we look ?

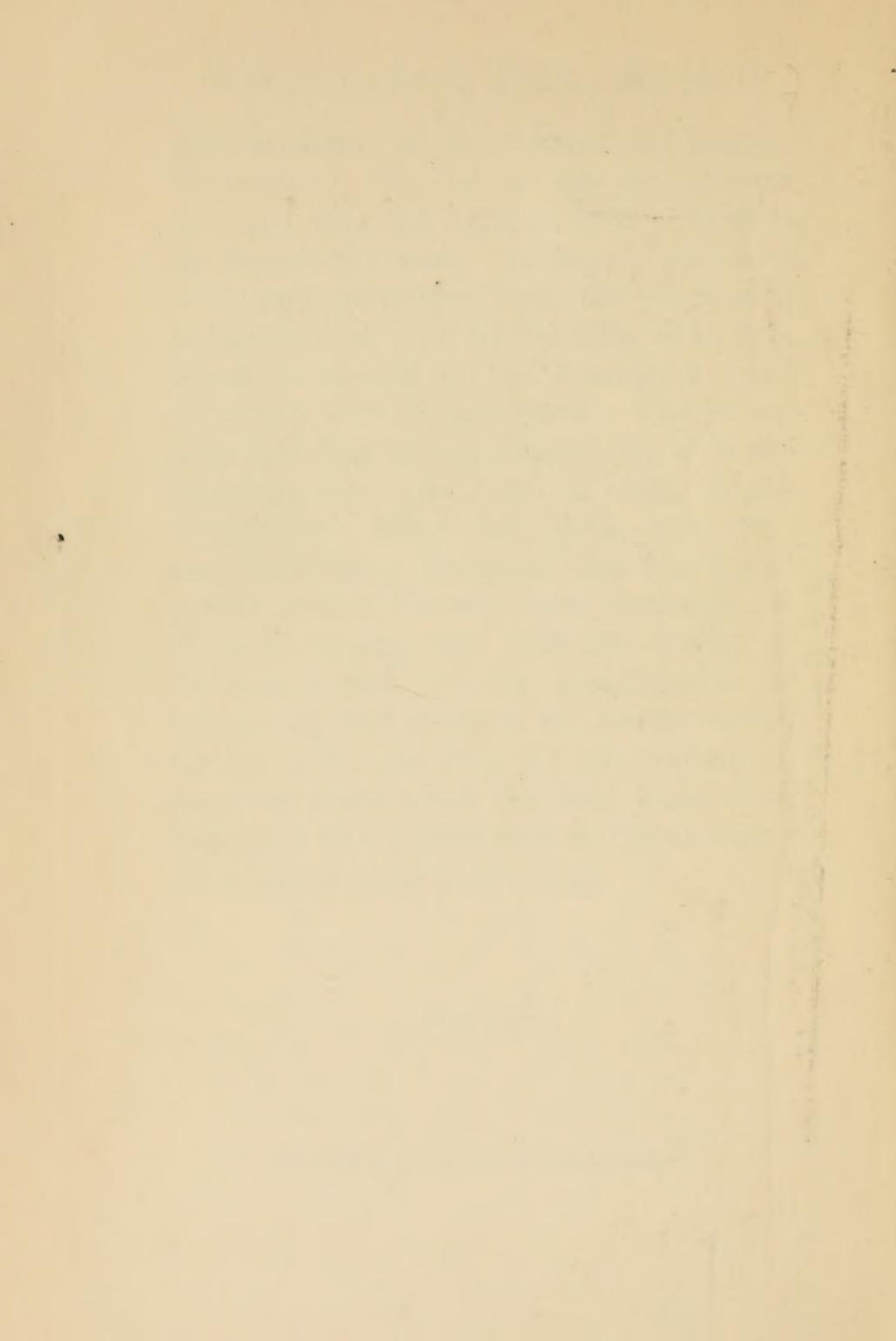
The fact that the faith was once delivered to the saints has become an obsession to a certain type of mind. It is forgotten that the faith is not a talent hidden in a napkin and buried in the ground, but a seed implanted in living hearts, destined to bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. Christianity looks back to a great historic moment of revelation, but the centre of its belief is that the Christ who once appeared in Galilee is the Christ who still lives and works, and is ever through His Spirit guiding and controlling the Church below. This Spirit, we are told, is to lead us into all truth ; and we cannot imagine that the process was completed when the Seer of the Apocalypse laid aside his pen, or when the president of the last Œcumenical Council closed its final session.

During the early years of her existence the Church lived in a civilization which was decaying, and later on was for a thousand years guardian, amidst surround-

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ing barbarism, of the remnants of a great civilization. In such an age to conserve the past was the highest duty. That is no longer the case. Antiquity was wise in its own generation, but the wisdom of antiquity may well be the folly of to-day. There is abroad in the Church a spirit of revival and of enterprise. The young men and the young women see a world perishing for the lack of that which Christianity alone can give, and they see Christianity paralysed and the moral power of the Church made bankrupt by disunity among the different bodies of Christians and by the maintenance of hampering and obsolete sex limits within the Church; and they are not content to stand by silent while the dead hand of an irrational and uncriticized tradition warns off advance along every road.

THE END



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