



**National Officers of N. C. W. C.**

Woman, therefore, should have in law definite, specific rights as nature has conferred upon her definite, specific duties. It is neither justifiable nor reasonable to level down these rights for the attainment of a purely theoretical identity.

—Miss Agnes G. Regan, Executive Secretary.

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## *Make Way for Women*

By BRO. BERNARD WALSH, O. P.



MRS. BELMONT, Miss Rebecca Hourwich and other leaders of the National Woman's Party have drawn up what they propose to make the twentieth amendment to the Constitution. On December 13, 1923, Mr. Daniel R. Anthony, representative from Kansas introduced into the House their proposed amendment.

### ARTICLE XX

Section 1—Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction.

Section 2—Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

The object of this amendment, as is plainly evident, is to remove all legal distinctions now existing between men and women. The idea back of the bill and the supposition upon which it rests is that there exists, between the sexes no real distinction but only some moth-eaten and dry-rotted conventions which had best be cleared away while we are in an orgy of wild legislation and constitutional amendments.

There is no doubt that this attitude in itself clashes with many old notions and faces much political and parliamentary opposition. And this litigious atmosphere is not softened by the tactics of the Women's Party. It deplores the antagonism between men and women and then foments it. It preaches equality between the sexes and then asserts its right to dictate. It asks for personal favors and concessions from men, who rightly or wrongly, hold the vantage ground politically and simultaneously, it repudiates the power of the male to concede. One who is looking for amusement can find mirthful paradoxes here. But the serious and causal thinker looks for a deeper philosophy of the question, untrammelled by politics or subtle prejudice.

Prejudice, politics and passion ought to unite in surrendering to reason to discover whether patent differences between the sexes are natural or acquired, whether these differences are a prelection on the superiority of either sex, whether the guarantee of complete civil equality will be neutralized by nature's liberal concession to the superiority of each sex in its own way. Civil law comes back to nature when it goes against it. Can legislators threatened by modern United States feminism learn from the law nature as interpreted by the Catholic Church? Her law is nature's law divinely sanctioned. Her law is the law of reason even though it be out of step with people's reasons.

If we are going to attempt to construct a platform preserving a proper balance between the sexes and stating the comparative relations of men and women in the commonwealth, we must first find the basis on which those relations have been built by nature. The capabilities and peculiarities of the two sexes determine their rights, duties and mutual relations. Time and generalized slogans can not solve this complex problem and diction must submit to nature if peace is to be established. If man is superior to woman or if woman is superior to man, or if, as the Woman's Party would have it, men and women are identical, can not be determined by vote or by the legislation votes can obtain. The only intelligent basis of estimation of a program of legislation or of anything else that considers the two sexes must be deduced from the individual merits, characteristics and powers of the two sexes.

If the two sexes are entirely without difference, then they should be absolutely equal in rights, duties, and career. But if the two sexes differ in any phase of their mental, moral and physical make-up, then it is unjust to both of them to establish a common plane of duties, rights and privileges. This idea must guide any intelligent inquiry into those questions which the rising movement of feminism raises about the equality, identity, superiority or inferiority of the sexes.

Neither man nor woman is superior in any one thing or in everything. There is no such thing as a superior sex in the sharp sense of the term. Man is superior to woman in certain respects and woman is superior to man in certain respects; but this does not entitle either entrenched manhood or militant womanhood to say that there is one superior sex. There is no truth in claims of a superior sex. There is no question of

superiority where there is no unique standard of judgment. And between man and woman there is no universal basis of comparison. They differ so much! One is the concave and the other the convex of human nature and the concave is nothing without the convex. Man and woman are complementary and the combination of the two of them makes human nature. Man is not human nature in its entirety; woman is not human nature in its fulness, but man and woman together cover the expanse of human nature. Neither the male nor the female is the superior sex; man and woman are not absolutely equal; they are not identical in all things. They are complementary, each playing that part which without the other it can not play and it is foolish to claim universal superiority for either one of them.

This truth that man and woman are complementary to one another, neither complete nor antagonistic, is the real solution of the social difficulties of feminism. Feminism generalizes on isolated abnormalities or freaks. St. Thomas would say that man or woman alone is either a beast or a saint. In each there is a something that craves for mutual completion. This feeling is not unholy, nor is it the fancy of a sickly sentimentalist. It was set in the human heart long ago, even before the second chapter of Genesis was acted. For God looked into the heart of Adam and saw it there already; then He proceeded to create Eve. "It is not good for man to be alone." Adam was not complete, he was not finished human nature until Eve came to join him and he welcomed what even common slang has recognized as his "better self."

When these two met and formed the first human society they joined their forces in life and became two in one flesh, one incorporate with two distinct and unconfused parts. In the distribution of labor in this small society, we must look, as we have already observed, for the commanding finger of nature. In this case nature gives unquestioning indications of her will. From the physical point of view there can be no doubt which is to be the mother of the family. Maternity is for woman and completely occupies her physical constitution. Physically woman means motherhood.

Even the moulding of her emotional and intellectual nature points to this supreme office of motherhood. Kindness, gentleness, tenderness, nobility of thought and generosity of purpose, supreme self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. These are woman's

birthright. These are the child's right and these nature uses under God to point out woman as the one best suited to govern where power is of no avail, where wisdom fails and where only love conquers.\* And even when woman is not a mother her



**Madonna—Raphael**

nature cries out her maternal instinct; because even the virgin's instinctive devotion to the children she instinctively makes her own proves the truth of what Benedict XV said when addressing the Italian Catholic Women's Union:

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\* Pastoral Letter of the American Hierarchy, 1919.



The changed conditions of the time have conferred upon women functions and rights which were not allowed her in former times. But no change in the opinions of men, no novelty of circumstance and events will ever remove woman conscious of her mission, from her natural center, which is the family.

No group, no matter how small, can achieve a common end unless some one mind is supreme. Where man and woman have been at least equal before marriage, they come to the fork in the road where one or the other must take command. The necessity for authority in the family is urgent and evident. Any family contract that excludes this natural subordination to one head has been so disastrous as to show that it is contrary not only to the natures of man and woman but also to all our experience of the necessities of organization. Thus we must look with disfavor on such moves of the National Woman's Party as that embodied in the Marriage Contract Bill which reads as follows:

The husband and wife may, either before or after marriage, contract with each other concerning all rights, duties, obligations and liabilities growing out of the marital relation and except as to the dissolution of the marriage the law shall hereafter regulate said rights, duties, obligations and liabilities only in default of particular agreements which the parties to the marriage may stipulate as they please.

Such a law would virtually do away with any sort of authority in the home and would convert marriage into a life-long bargain drawn up in one day and drawn out for a lifetime. The same organization's proposed blanket bill for introduction into the state legislatures, would go a step further and specify just what would be the rights of women irrespective of such a contract. Among them it names the retention of the maiden name, the choice of domicile and residence. It is apparent on the face of things that such bills where they are subversive of authority and unity in the home are not in conformity with the principles of nature.

Although the principles of nature demand that some one hold authority in the home, they do not specify who shall possess this authority. To find out who is the one elected by nature for this position, we can have recourse to the Word of God where we will see that in His divine scheme, which is no other word than nature, man has been chosen governor of the home. "To the woman also He said: 'Thou shalt be under thy hus-

band's power, and he shall have dominion over thee'" (Gen. III, 16).

This authority of a husband over his wife is by no means a power tyrannical and degrading to the dignity of women. A horrible error has gotten abroad under the hallowed name of liberty, and beneath the spell of this deceit men and, especially women, have come to believe that obedience is weak and disgraceful. Christ was obedient and yet divine; he showed and His mother showed that obedience is not inferiority. Obedience is divine when it unites in a common purpose man and woman who test their worth by God's rules. In other words, obedience far from removing a person from his high station raises one still higher to the things he seeks. The obedient Christ asks the wife to be obedient to her husband. This sort of lofty obedience the husband may ask of his wife and she has less right to feel personal inferiority than he has to feel individual superiority for that reason. Legislation which would conflict with man's divinely constituted superiority in the home must be questioned. But laws that protect a wife in her dowry rights, personal inheritance and just control of her private income are Catholic measures that recognize the divinely constituted male authority in the family without denying the superiority of the woman in other things.

The question of rights and duties of a wife is of less moment at present than the rights of the single woman, especially, the working woman. At present the United States has about eight million working women, of whom a third are mere girls ranging from fourteen to twenty-one years of age. All of these, however, possess some rights which the state must guard in proportion as the women and, particularly the young girls, are not able to defend their own rights by the strong arm of union and collective bargaining.

Each one of these women has in some degree the power to make a choice of her state in life and by that choice to determine the kind and quality of her rights. Some will vow their virginity to God and live their lives in the peaceful submission to His yoke. Of these we need not worry, for their right is to suffer for Christ's sake. But the large majority of women will remain in the world and will divide themselves into two classes. Some will accept the opportunity of becoming wives and their rights will be as we have already determined. But until these

women align themselves with either the religious or married state they form a separate caste of single women.

Some have questioned the right of these women to devote their lives to a career and to refuse the responsibilities of motherhood. But one may not deny woman the privilege of remaining single if she wishes. Certainly no law of race perpetuity binds the individual today and woman is not directly forbidden by a divine commandment from seeking a career. Christianity has given woman public recognition of the fact that she is a person and has a personality worth developing. If the maiden state is best for this growth, there is no reason for forbidding her that choice.

Where a woman takes up a public career she acquires the particular rights of her position but she can not stamp out the fundamental traces of nature. When they come down to the actual work of determining in sharp legal phraseology the exact right of woman, married or unmarried, the law-givers usually forget the differences which nature, not men, has marked out.

The nineteenth amendment which accorded women universal suffrage in the United States was significant. Times had changed and the conventions are ever crumbling. There was nothing in the idea of woman suffrage that conflicted with the Catholic idea of woman's rights. Surely it was not new though such legislation was justly called progressive. But the suggested twentieth amendment of the National Woman's Party makes the Catholic Church certain that advanced legislation in favor of women is neither human nor divine.

The proposed amendment would give woman an absolute equality with men before the law, an equality that ignores common sense. It fails to consider that the working woman is not physically a man and therefore should not be legally accepted as such. It is evident that woman can not successfully compete physically with men for they can not support fatigue with the same freedom as men can. Whenever women are subjected to hard physical labor the strain generally proves costly to them and ultimately to the race. In New York City from 1917 to 1920 inclusive, when the number of women workers rose so suddenly on account of the drafting of men, the period for tubercular deaths among women worked down in a most threatening fashion. Formerly death from tuberculosis appeared between the ages of twenty-four and twenty-nine years; but during those



few years it dropped to the startling low figure of twenty to twenty-four years. Yet from 1911 to 1920 the deaths of men from tuberculosis rose from a top mark of thirty-seven and a half years to forty-seven.

With this in mind we can not but be alarmed when many of the best legal authorities in the United States state that the language in the proposed bill for unrestricted equality for women might be construed as invalidating labor laws which apply special health measures to women and not to men, such as, laws regulating the hours of employment, providing seats in stores, factories, elevators, etc., establishing minimum wage commissions, prohibiting night work and the employment of women immediately before and after confinement.

Legally women's danger is not that their just claims will be deferred too long but that their impetuosity will gain them disastrous concessions. Equal rights in theory and equal rights in fact are two things quite distinct. Obtaining equal rights in theory might place women and men before the law as if they were identical. Many modern minded men desire that women should secure all possible equality before the law and the full liberty of business and the professions. No one cares to see unjust inheritance laws perpetuated, or discriminations against wives continued, or the equal guardianship of children denied to mothers. But the feminist movement in general and the National Woman's Party in particular need beware lest they isolate woman in a strange land or assign her an awkward and unbecoming place in the plan of life. Their work should be to find the niche which God has assigned woman in the scheme of creation rather than to strive for the impossible honor of creating her a new and unnatural one.