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HOLT CARLETON MARLOW

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APPROVED BY

John S. Ezell

J. G. Pritchard

Lonnelle B. Aikin

Eileen Dale

Bruce D. Hoch

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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THE IDEOLOGY OF THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENT, 1750-1860

INTRODUCTION

Every civilization settles itself upon several pillar-ideas and by logical or illogical extension of these fundamental conceptions, more or less shapes its institutional forms and everyday activities. Its conception of justice, form of government, whether monarchic, plutocratic, republican, socialistic, or communistic, and the source of political power all reflect their power. The structure of society, the relationship of the sexes, etiquette, morals, education, and even recreation spring from the ideological bedrock.

When a different pillar-idea challenges the older ideological structure, the reverberations are felt throughout a civilization. The struggle may be short, but it generally extends over centuries filling the pages of history with wars, theological controversies, political intrigues, intellectual ferment, oppression and great migrations of people. The history of modern western civilization might be viewed thus. After the Renaissance, several new ideas challenged the older ones with varying degrees of success. Each has been accompanied by confusion, religious controversy, political and military struggles.

The older pillar-ideas of western civilization considered man innately determined before birth; his mind, character, disposition, station and rank were predestined by that nature at conception. The

universal church with its authoritarianism, procedural salvation, and institutional control rested upon the supposed innate evil nature of man. Calvinism adopted innate total depravity and spread the idea wherever its followers went. Also the stratification of society into the elite and the masses, the unequal division of privileges and rights, the unequal distribution of economic goods, unequal taxation, unequal legal status, unequal justice, the unequal labor responsibilities of the various classes in society, and the unequal educational and social opportunities rested on this idea. It also supported a maldistribution of luxuries, entertainment, and amusements. Few, if any, areas of the political, economic, social, religious, cultural, and intellectual life of western civilization escaped the influence of innate determinism.

The challenge of environmentalism disavowed innate determinism and the whole body of ideas which had been deduced from it. Over the centuries it attempted to substitute its belief in the essential goodness of man for the one in his evilness. By making the environment rather than heredity more influential in the development of the individual, it sponsored the attack on the institutions and authoritarianism which promoted inequality and injustice by giving the few a wealth of knowledge and experiences which opened and improved the mind and character. Environmentalism became the backbone of democratic governments, public educational systems, fluid social structures, equality before the law, religious liberty, intellectual freedom, and privileges and rights based upon developed talents and abilities. Over the last several

centuries, its influence has reached into nearly every part of western civilization.

The concept of woman has not escaped the din of this battle. The application of environmentalism to the position and role of women led to a revolution in the thought about the female. However the conflict of pillar-ideas has been a neglected part of the research on the woman's movement. What has been done describes the external changes women and their male supporters have made in divorce laws, clothing, the home, and similar items. The few interpretive works on the woman's movement have been either associated with the struggle for feminine enfranchisement or her part in nationalizing prohibition. However, the movement was much broader. It hoped to completely reconstruct woman's place in society by redoing her relationship to man, domestic duties, society, and employment outside the home. The ensuing revolt of women produced a feminine literature--magazines, newspapers, and journals--, broke down barriers against women entering the professional and work-a-day world of men, and completely changed, in some instances, the legal status of woman. Her subordinate role in marriage practically disappeared while her responsibility toward children, fidelity, and the home ceased to be performed strictly for a "lord of creation." The double standard, prudery, and sex education reeled under the impact of the changing views about women.

Women actively entered the liberal movements to abolish slavery, the peace movement, enlightened criminology, prohibition, and treatment of the deaf, dumb, and insane. They pressured for an unsexed franchise and more participation in government by the citizen. In society, they

not only maintained preeminence but formed their own organizations and societies, changed the proprieties, separated the sexes, then promoted "togetherness," broke down the barriers of strictly all-male clubs, and in general established the semblence of a matriarchy. In religion, they initiated theological changes favorable to women, gained access to the ministry, and turned many strictly women's church meetings into reform bodies. They reformed feminine dress, hair styles, and personal habits. Lastly, they changed the "ideal woman" from a "kept woman" who was willowy, sickly, and fragile to a healthy, self-confident, aggressive, self-employable female with her own personality and self-direction.

Popular explanations of the woman's rights movement have also emphasized the changes set in motion by the industrial revolution, urbanization, technological advances, and other external changes. As important as these milieu influences were, they should not overshadow the ideological reaction people had to these changes or the intellectual currents in the United States. The latter has been neglected in the woman's rights movement, and it is hoped that this work will be the beginning of more research in this important area.

The basic ingredient in any social movement is an ideological change. However, that is not the whole story. Ideas may sometimes change while mores remain little affected. Changes in basic ideas usually are accompanied by or coincide with changes in the external world of men. Each in turn may support the other. Without alterations in the milieu, which pave the way for the acceptance of new ideas, ideological variation seldom receives more than token acceptance by a people.

Sometimes, the changes in the milieu pave the way for the creation of new ideas, and sometimes new ideas stimulate people to change parts of their milieu. Ideological and environmental changes then, seem to complement each other.

Since the essential chronology of the woman's movement is contained in various monographs, it will not be repeated in this work. Instead two general areas will be used. The first, approximately 1750 to 1800, deals with the general theory of innate determinism and how it affected the lives of women. It is an attempt to assess how science, medicine, politics, history, etiquette, literature, and other bodies of knowledge logically expanded this pillar-idea into a full blown ideology to guide women's lives. The second, about 1800 to 1860, describes environmentalism and the logical deductions which were made from it. The evidence which was marshalled to prove those contentions and the serious challenge it threw at the older ideology in the nineteenth century will be investigated.

Although the implications of environmentalism for women never received a complete analysis or synthesis by one person, fragments of it were well articulated by different people. It is the purpose of the following work to discuss the above mentioned basic ideas and what they meant to their propounders.

The author originally intended to look for basic ideas which might exist behind the woman's movement from 1920 to 1940. Once into the source materials, it became apparent that women were discussing specific techniques and projects instead of fundamental concepts which

seemed already settled in their minds. After working backwards to the source of the woman's movement in the 1790's, it seemed appropriate to investigate the established view of woman as a means to determine how new the emerging ideas about woman were. Soon the overwhelming task was how to organize the mass of material. While reviewing some conservative literature, it became clear that the vast majority of these writers claimed the female inherited a "sexual nature" which made her different from man. This proved upon further investigation to be the pillar-idea of conservative thought--innatism. A similar discovery was made in liberal literature, but the central idea was environmentalism. These two ideas then became the organizational structure for this work.

PART I

THE CONSERVATIVE VIEW OF WOMAN

CHAPTER I

THE INNATE NATURE OF WOMAN

The Natural Order for Woman

The second half of the eighteenth century extolled the natural laws which governed all of nature. Human institutions, whether political, social, religious, or intellectual came to be viewed as part of this natural order but subject to their own special laws. While most of the leading thinkers and writers investigated the significance which natural laws had for society, a number of individuals began to apply these same ideas to the sexes. The latter concluded that each sex had a separate sphere with its own laws within the larger framework of nature.

By using the great chain of being, the dominant scientific and philosophic view of the century,[1] they fully substantiated this conclusion. According to that theory, the universe was filled with diverse kinds of beings from the Absolute or God to the smallest

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[1]Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, a Study of the History of an Idea (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 183. The words "Nature" and "The Great Chain of Being" were the sacred phrases of the eighteenth century and were to that time what the word "evolution" was to the late nineteenth century. Never before or after was the idea so widely disseminated and accepted. Its impact on the thought about woman was part of its pervasion in the United States.

particle. The following diagram of the scale of beings will better explain the continuity and plentitude of life conception.[2]

DIAGRAM 1

THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

God

Various orders of immaterial substances descending from God

Various orders of angels

Various orders of human beings

Various orders of animals

Various orders of plants

Various orders of inanimate and inorganic substances

Everything had its special place in the chain with its own natural government or laws; or in the case of man who had a degree of choice, laws by which to abide. There was a different set of laws for the inanimate than for the animate; a different one for the inorganic than for the organic; a different set for plants than for animals; still a different one for animals than for man.

Every degree of life and every capacity of being had a prescribed place in the scheme. Although the beings of any level of the scale had no genetic relationship to those above or below them, they

[2] Ibid.; William Wollaston, The Religion of Nature Delineated (6th ed.; London: Printed for John and Paul Knapton, 1738), pp. 107-109.

tended to fade into each other until chasms or gaps between the levels of the chain were non-existent. The transition from one level to another had so many infinitesimal degrees that the boundaries between them were indistinguishable and imperceptible to man. Thus a middle kind or transitional figure existed which seemed to the unwary to belong to two orders. For example, fossils and shell fish appeared as the connecting link between the inanimate and plants; zoophytes as the one between plants and animals; winged fish and cold-blooded birds filled the gap between fish and fowl; amphibious animals such as alligators, frogs, and turtles linked the terrestrial and acquatic worlds; the Orang-Outangs united man and beast; man united the visible and invisible creatures; angels stood between men and superior immaterial beings, which in turn related angels and God. Thus a plentitude of beings existed in a continuous hierarchy.[3]

In the case of man, a special ordering of beings ascended and descended from him[4] as illustrated below. The human part of the scale blended with the continuous stratification of beings but was the only place where the material and spiritual were combined or where the brute creation and spiritual realm joined. Below the highest type of man, the Caucasian, God had filled in the spaces with the Oriental, Indian, Negro, and Hottentot. Some argument existed as to whether the Orang-

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[3]Lovejoy, pp. 56, 57, 184, 185, 234; Wollaston, p. 108; /Samuel Johnson/, Elementa Philosophica (Philadelphia: B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1752), pp. 18-19, in Early American Imprints, 1639-1800, ed. Dr. Clifford K. Shipton (readex microprint cards; Worcester, Mass.: The American Antiquarian Society, 1959), no. 6859, hereafter referred to as EAI.

[4]Lovejoy, pp. 234-235; Wollaston, pp. 108-109.

Outang was the highest form of the apes or the lowest form of man. Some thought he uttered human and animal sounds; others thought such noises were the apex of animal intelligence.

DIAGRAM 2

MAN AND THE GREAT SCALE OF BEING

More advanced angels

Lowest type of angels

Man (Caucasian)

Orientals

Indians

Negroes

Hottentots (lowest form of Negroes)

Orang-Outangs (higher form of apes)

Lower apes

Woman received individual treatment in the scale of beings. She was a connecting link between man and monkeys, said Dean Swift.[5] Although he made no mention of what this scheme would do to female Indians, Negroes, and Orang-Outangs or whether or not woman possessed immortality, his idea and its implications became popular in the eighteenth century. Being lower in the scale of being than man, woman had less reason, partook more of animal instincts, had to rely upon man as he relied on higher

[5]The Lady's Pocket Library (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1792), p. 231, in EAI no. 24452.

intelligences, and was to please man as he pleased those above him; in short, she was less perfect in every way. Concomitantly, some doubted whether woman had a soul. In 1792 even Mary Wollstonecraft, who did more to start the woman's movement than any other woman, acknowledged that her generation doubted whether woman was "a moral agent, or the link which united man with brutes."[6]

Thus a feminine sphere existed within the natural order for human beings, one established by divine decree which separated woman from man. A distinct set of laws governed her sphere, and a different set governed the masculine one. The physical universe was a perfect analogy. As each planet spun in its own orbit according to the decrees of God and nature so man was lord, and woman, lordess.[7]

Woman's natural place contained specific laws governing her physique, mind, character, duties, responsibilities, social role, and relationship to man. Should she try to live by laws other than her own, especially those governing the male sphere, a profusion of evils would result. Obedience made her happy, useful, and acceptable to God. Certain natural rights followed as a matter of course, making it easier for her to fulfill her destiny. Refusal to abide by those natural requirements negated any claim to natural privileges. Also it was reasoned that since the place of woman was "natural," it had to be

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[6]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), p. 40. A more complete discussion of whether or not woman had a soul will be found in Chapter VII.

[7]Page Smith, John Adams (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962), II, 1005-1006.

"right," proper and good. No sane woman would desire to flout what Providence had ordained for her good.[8]

The Innate Sexual Nature of Woman

The belief in distinct places in the scale of beings for woman and man meant each needed a peculiar nature to match his separate sphere. Providence, it was said, had given woman an innate sexual nature powerful enough that it gave a sex to every aspect of her being while man who lacked a sexual nature was her antithesis. This original makeup left woman feminine in mind and body, but man masculine. Her different personality, moral nature, and virtues guided her daily life. Any vices she might have would be purely feminine--different from masculine ones. Her domesticity and peculiar disposition originated in this natural proclivity.[9] The immutable difference between woman and

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[8]The above description was also true for man but only in that natural order set aside for him by God. Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1911), pp. 321, 327, 346; Hannah More, Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies (Philadelphia, 1786), pp. 1, 62, in EAI no. 19810; Benjamin Rush, Thoughts Upon Female Education (Philadelphia: Pritchard and Hall, 1787), p. 25, in EAI no. 20691; /William Kendrick/, The Whole Duty of Woman (Philadelphia: Crukshank, 1788), p. 16, in EAI no. 21184; Enos Hitchcock, Memoirs of the Bloomsgrove Family (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), I, 125-126, II, 16, 47, in EAI no. 22570; Noah Webster, A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), pp. 410-411, in EAI no. 23053; /Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert/, The Ladies Friend (New Haven: Abel-Morse, 1789), pp. 15-16, in EAI no. 21708; John Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners (3d ed.; Dublin, 1794), p. 72, in EAI no. 26722; Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or The Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Haverhill, 1794), p. 49, in EAI no. 29829.

[9]Rousseau, p. 321ff; James Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women (1st American ed.; Boston, 1781), pp. 2, 27, 29, 42, 46, 49, in EAI no. 19408; Hester Mulso Chapone, Letters on

man resulted from her innate sexual nature.

Those living in the second half of the eighteenth century believed woman received an innate pattern of development from her peculiar nature which relegated environmental influence to a subordinate role in determining her character. Her physical and mental attributes developed along lines quite different than man's. Her innate proclivity for dolls, curls, dresses, and other feminine objects created a distinctive female environment instead of the environment creating a feminine nature. On the other hand, a woman subjected too long to plows, horses, ships, books, politics, tools, and other masculine paraphernalia--an environment contrary to her nature--would have a warped personality by the unwarranted influence of these male items. Uncontrolled environmental influences might subtly lead a woman or man from his or her prescribed natural sphere through the violation of the natural laws set aside for each. The resulting multiplicity of evils justified protecting woman from such disrupting influences. Therefore, the leading thinkers and writers recognized the need to control and subordinate the environmental influences to the natural directive forces inherent in woman.[10]

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the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady (5th ed.; Worcester, 1783), I, 82, II, 133, in EAI no. 17869; Enos Hitchcock, A Discourse on Education (Providence: Wheeler, 1785), p. 4, in EAI no. 19040; James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (new ed.; Philadelphia, 1787), pp. 18, 101, 105, 161, 245, 250, 307, 308, 310, 316, in EAI no. 20362; Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., I, 246, II, 23, 47; Webster, p. 406; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 88, 149, 184, 214, 226; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 38, 55; Burton, pp. 45, 55, 62, 72, lecture xxiv; Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London, 1798), pp. 11, 13, 14, 23, 84, 98, in EAI no. 33801.

[10]Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., I, 64, 66, 82, 184, II, 25; Gisborne, pp. 27, 144-156; Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, p. 46; More, pp. 66-67; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 316.

This innate sexual nature was evident in the earliest years of life when the "tiniest little girl" practiced coquetry, tried to please, sought to charm, loved finery, was docile and obedient, sought admiration, and worried about her beauty. She irresistibly took to mirrors, jewelry, clothes, and especially to dolls, while boys wanted movement, noise, drums, tops, and other such things. Her special possession, the doll, occupied all her time during the day, and an impulsive drive made her more eager to dress and adorn the doll than to eat. Later she would become her own doll and lavish all the adornment on herself which she had given the doll.[11] As her mind matured, her life would be controlled by what people thought of her. This instinctive bent indicated her lifetime habits in its preferences for eye-catching clothes, ornaments, little graces, and airs.

Her life was clearly marked in another way. Girls preferred to sew, "cut out," embroider, make lace, and draw than to learn, especially to read and write. Bows, tippets, sashes, tuckers, and other items of feminine attire were her history geography, mathematics, and rhetoric.[12] In amusement, dress, or manners, woman amused herself with dancing, music, drawing, and riding, while men followed the more savage sports of hunting and fishing.[13]

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[11]Rousseau, pp. 329, 330, 331; Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., I, 64, II, 25.

[12]Rousseau, p. 331.

[13]George Wright, The Lady's Miscellany (Boston: William T. Clap, 1797), pp. 117-121, in EAI no. 33251; Henry Home, Lord Kames, Six Sketches on the History of Man (Philadelphia: Bell and Aitken, 1776), p. 195, in EAI no. 14801.

The conception of an innate feminine nature created to fill a special place in the natural order of nature and subjected to special natural laws had vast implications for woman. Writers of all types--poets, authors, philosophers, politicians, historians, deists, orthodox divines, and popular essayists--applied it to the various aspects of her life. The rules, regulations, and precepts which were deduced from this pillar-idea institutionalized woman's life in eighteenth century America and led to a fully developed ideology about woman.

CHAPTER II

THE PHYSIQUE OF WOMAN

The Innate Sexual Nature of Woman's Physique

Woman's innate sexual nature differentiated her physique from that of man. According to the innatists, this sexual nature permeated all the organs of her body, not merely the reproductive. Her smaller body, slender bones, delicate muscles with more fat between their fibers, and slight bodily processes evidenced this. It made her short, narrow, smooth, soft, and fair while man was tall, broad, rough, hard, and brown. The feminine physique had more concave lines while the masculine had more convex ones. In general, she was curved and round, and he was straighter and more angular.[1]

Her sexual nature appeared in less conspicuous ways. Longer and more pliant hair, less bushy eyebrows, and a perpendicular countenance differentiated her from man. Soft, lovely, gentle, and refined features characterized her physique instead of the massive, chunky, rough, and heavy ones of the male. In a group of people, she

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[1]Johann Casper Lavater, Essays on Physiognomy, trans. Mr. Holcrofts (abridged ed.; Boston: Printed for William Spotswood and David West, 1794), pp. 175-178, in EAI no. 27203; Albert von Haller, First Lines of Physiology (1st American ed., trans. from the 3d Latin ed.; Troy: Obadiah Penniman and Co., 1803), p. 420; Andrew Fyfe, A Compendium of the Anatomy of the Human Body (2d ed., with improvements; Edinburg: J. Pillans and Sons, 1801), I, 99; The American Spectator, or Matrimonial Preceptor (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1797), p. 218, in EAI no. 31725.

lacked his daring, commanding, fierce appearance, but her gayness contrasted markedly with his seriousness. She was naturally tractable, fearful, and shy while he stood firm and steadfast; she glanced and felt while he surveyed and observed.[2]

Although it appeared that each sex had the same organs, needs, and faculties, the sexual nature made general and subtle differences in all parts of the female physique.[3] For instance, the organs of woman were tender, sensitive, and more easily wounded than those of man.[4] According to the innatist, the likenesses of the sexes came from their being of the human species while the differences arose from woman's innate sexual nature.[5] "Considered from these two standpoints," said Rousseau, "we find so many instances of likeness and unlikeness that it is perhaps one of the greatest marvels how nature has contrived to make two beings so like and yet so different."[6]

Eighteenth century America also used the scriptures to

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[2]Lavater, p. 178; The American Spectator, p. 218; Cotton Mather, Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion (Cambridge: Samuel Phillips, 1692), p. 19, in EAI no. 624; Erasmus Darwin, A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education (Philadelphia, 1798), pp. 10-11, in EAI no. 33601; /John Bennett/, Strictures on Female Education (Norwich: Ebenezer Bushnell, 1792), pp. 91-92, in EAI no. 24094.

[3]Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1911), p. 321; Alexander Hamilton (M.D.), Treatise on the Management of Female Complaints (New York: Samuel Campbell, 1795), p. 53, in EAI no. 28794; Henry Home, Lord Kames, Six Sketches on the History of Man (Philadelphia: Bell and Aitken, 1776), p. 195, in EAI no. 14801.

[4]Lavater, p. 175.

[5]Rousseau, p. 321.

[6]Ibid.

substantiate woman's innate sexual physique. In the creation the model for woman was man, whereas he was patterned after God. She was taken out of man--one of his ribs--instead of from the ground[7] and fashioned from this part. Hence she was not equal to the whole of man.[8] Even in New Testament times, St. Peter understood the important physical differences which existed between the sexes, as he said, "Give honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel."[9]

The innatist interpreted these scriptures to mean that woman was not the foundation of the building but the material--gold, silver, wood, brick, precious stones--for building the superstructure. She was the leaven added to flour, the oil added to vinegar, or the second part of the book of man.[10] As the weaker vessel she was dependent upon man for protection, knowledge, and the necessities of life and occupied a distinctive place in the divine order of nature, beside man but under his direction.

Merciless satires of the eighteenth century constantly reminded women in a crude and gross fashion of their physical inferiority. For example, it was even said that God took less pleasure in the female than in male symmetry. Feminine constitutional softness was an object of shame, for no glory attached itself to it. In the latter part of the century, the attitude shifted from the "weaker vessel" to the "give

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[7]Gen. 2: 21-23.

[8]Lavater, p. 175.

[9]I Pet. 3: 7.

[10]Lavater, p. 177.

honor" part of St. Peter's statement. Concomitant with this emphasis came an attack upon those who had written the satires and ridicules on woman. They were accused of being ignorant of the purpose of nature in sexual differentiation and of violating the commandment of God when they did not give honor unto the wife as the weaker vessel.[11]

Although much of the bitterness associated with the view of woman as an inferior creature began to disappear by the latter part of the eighteenth century, her place in the scale of beings remained static. The estimation of woman rose as feminine frailty became synonymous with natural womanliness. Constitutional softness represented the special gift of God to woman, and its traits became femininity: beauty was feminine, strength masculine; timidity, feminine, courage, masculine; sickliness, feminine, robustness, masculine; lack of appetite, feminine, and hunger, masculine.

This allowed woman to sublimate her physical reproach into an honor and to cultivate its attributes as special gifts from nature. She could dress and decorate herself, pretend to no appetite, be frightened of spiders and mice, and appear unhealthy without feeling

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[11]James Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women (1st American ed.; Boston, 1781), pp. 1, 3, 4, 5, 20, 21, in EAI no. 19408; James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (new ed.; Philadelphia, 1787), pp. 169-170, 210, 211, 212, 227, in EAI no. 20362 (One of the sub-themes of this book is an attack upon the satirists and those who ridiculed women); Rousseau, p. 349 (Rousseau opposed "modern philosophy" making a jest of female modesty); Enos Hitchcock, Memoirs of the Bloomsgrove Family (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), I, 17, in EAI no. 22570; The Female Character Vindicated, or An Answer to the Scurrilous Invectives of Fashionable Gentlemen (Philadelphia: Thomas Bradford, 1795), pp. 1-12, in EAI no. 28664; Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London, 1798), p. 13, in EAI no. 33801.

ashamed. By such means she attracted the protection of a man, then held and controlled him.

Concomitantly, a new interpretation of the words "weaker vessel" appeared which stated that in the creation of the human race, God had saved the finest materials for woman's physique. From these materials came the "porcelain clay" or more delicate and fragile part of mankind. Since the costlier and finer materials went into the more delicately constructed feminine physique, it could be easily broken or hurt. Hence God required man to "give honor" unto the woman.

This honor consisted partly in a tender usage which the delicate female constitution dictated. Vessels of a finer and weaker contexture received honor and respect by being exempt from the coarsest and hardest duties or handled with the same rudeness and careless negligence as those of a stronger construction. Man owed lenient treatment to feminality on account of its comparative weakness, special hardships and sufferings set aside for it by Providence.[12]

The Natural Physical Equality of the Sexes

Nevertheless nature decreed a physical equality for the sexes by giving each its own inequalities and superiorities. The peculiar physical gifts of woman made her superior in her own sphere just as

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[12]William Jenks (ed.), The Comprehensive Commentary on the Holy Bible (Brattleboro: Fessenden and Co., 1835), I, 30; Joel Foster, The Duties of a Conjugal State (Stonington-Port: Printed by Samuel Trumbull, 1800), pp. 9, 10, in EAI no. 37437; Hannah More, Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies (Philadelphia, 1786), p. 2, in EAI no. 19810; George Wright, The Lady's Miscellany (Boston: William T. Clap, 1797), p. 28, in EAI no. 33251.

those of man made him superior in his. Hence, the innatists who claimed to understand the wise designs of nature did not concern themselves with what they called the irrational and unimportant problems of inequality, inferiority and superiority of the sexes.[13]

Since nature established a natural balance of power between the sexes, the physical dependence and subordination of woman were compensated by making the feminine virtues of fascination, elegance, grace, and symmetry to woman what strength was to man. The proper use of these natural physical gifts protected her from male tyranny or kept her life from being one continuous rape, said the innatist.

The essence of this problem for her consisted of how to cope with his greater physical strength and boundless passion, her own strong passion, weaker physical strength, and innate desire to please man. Furthermore, being endowed with a capacity to stimulate man beyond his limited sexual potential, she could destroy him and civilization through dissipation. The basic ingredients for that mass annihilation consisted of a warm climate, more women born than men, and the erotic powers of woman turned into a practical philosophy. Feminine tyranny would at last overpower the men and drag them to their deaths without the least chance for them to escape, said Rousseau.[14]

According to this view, woman exercised a mysterious reign over man through the mildness of her disposition and the commanding

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[13]Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 316, 210; Hitchcock, II, 58; /Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert/, The Ladies Friend (New Haven: Abel-Morse, 1789), pp. 8, 9, in EAI no. 21708.

[14]Rousseau, p. 322.

gentleness of her manners. Her native physical modesty which gave her an awesome power over his will and affections amply compensated her for any physical dependence and subordination. Like the laws of attraction and repulsion which nature used to preserve the equilibrium of the world, the laws of feminine virtues and masculine strength provided a natural balance of power between the sexes.[15]

Nature protected woman in other ways. It limited the sexual capacity of man, placed his passions under the control of his reason, and lastly, gave woman the innate law of feminine modesty and shame to govern her bodily passions and unlimited sexual potential.

The combination of modesty, shame and cleverness protected woman from the aroused male and restrained her boundless sexual passion much as instinct regulated the sexual impulses in female animals. Feminine modesty and shame instinctively kept her from destroying herself and man. Nature also established in each sex, as a law for human beings, a desire for right conduct or the delight which sprang from the right use of their sexual powers.[16]

Natural physical equality was maintained in another way. The innate sexual physique of woman made her approach to intimacy different from that of man. Although she aimed at the same goal, she took an opposite path to arrive there, hence differentiated the sexes in their physical and moral relations. Man desired woman to be weak, passive, and offer little resistance while she wanted him to be strong, active, and

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[15]Hitchcock, II, 17.

[16]Rousseau, pp. 322-323.

willful. Her specific physical aim was to make herself appealing to him, and her moral aim was to convince his sovereignty of her purity. Her charms, then, when used to please him became feminine virtues, and his strength, when used to please woman, became masculine virtues. The origin of sexual attack and defence--the boldness of the male and the timidity of the female, and even the origin of feminine shame and modesty with which nature had armed weaker woman for the conquest of the stronger man--sprang from the innate sexual physique of woman.[17]

As part of the sexual balance of power, nature gave woman control of the sex act at all times. By skillfully using her charms, she could stimulate man, and the natural resistance of her modesty and shame would arouse his strength, thus bringing his pride to the restraint of his desires. Although she naturally repelled him, she did not always do so with the same vigor and therefore not always with the same success. Any successful siege of the fortress was always permitted and directed by her; hence, nature compelled man to please her in order that she would yield to his superior force. Thus each rejoiced triumphantly in the other's victory.

Reason prohibited man from using real violence by identifying violence with brutality, and nature gave woman enough strength to resist if she desired. The use of violence defeated her purpose, for any declaration of war allowed her to defend liberty and person even to the death of either party. However, most women were clever enough not to allow man to derive satisfaction from rape or forced sexual pleasure.

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[17] Ibid., p. 322.

She who pleased most, left her husband in doubt as to whether it was weakness that had yielded to force or whether she voluntarily surrendered to him because he was something special to her. This uncertainty constituted the chief charm of his victory.[18]

Since the pleasure of man greatly depended on the good will of the fair sex, he had to pay attention to her if he hoped to achieve a peaceful conquest. By this means nature had led mankind unconsciously from the physical and grosser union of the sexes to the laws of love and morality.

Thus nature decreed that woman would reign through her charms and cunning rather than by the will of man. If such power could be taken away from her, explained Rousseau, she would have lost it at the dawn of history. Neither gallantry nor magnanimity on the part of the male, but an inexorable law, made the stronger sex appear to be the master while in reality he was dependent upon the weaker sex for his happiness. The natural equality between the physically weak woman and the physically strong man was firmly maintained in this way by nature.[19]

It was through the above reasoning that Rousseau restored woman to her natural throne of beauty and personal charm, said Madame de Stael, and removed her usurped influence in public affairs.[20] Mary

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[18] Ibid., p. 323.

[19] Ibid., p. 324.

[20] Madame Anne Louise de Stael, Lettres sur les Ouvrages et le Caractère de J. J. Rousseau (2d ed.; Paris: Charles Pougens, 1798), pp. 17-18.

Wollstonecraft, who admitted the universal persuasion of Rousseau's ideas, said far too many women bowed at his throne of sensuality and sensibility instead of bowing to reason and human dignity.[21]

The Peculiar Sexual Constitution of Woman

Much of the thought about the constitution of woman came from medical treatises heavily influenced by Brunonianism, the dominant medical system in late eighteenth century America. It supposed that human beings had an invisible fluid, sometimes called "animal spirits," which flowed along the nerves. Life depended upon the continuous stimulation of this fluid from either external or internal causes. When the animal spirits flowed through the body too slowly or too rapidly, sickness and disease resulted. The right amount of stimulation or excitement would restore a person to health while excessive or deficient stimulation would continue the physical debility. Brunonian remedies called for stimulants such as drugs and liquors to raise the excitement of the nervous fluid to its proper level or for bleeding off the excess blood in the body to allay the agitated blood, hence calm the nerves.[22]

Benjamin Rush (1745-1813) popularized this quagmire of excitement, debility, and stimuli in the United States.[23] He differed

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[21]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), pp. 112-113.

[22]/John Brown/, The Elements of Medicine (Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1790), pp. vii, 3-4, 12, 22, 29, 50-51, 54, 62, 68, in EAI no. 22373.

[23]Benjamin Rush, Medical Inquiries and Observations (Philadelphia: Budd and Bartram, 1798), V, 106.

from John Brown, his teacher at Edinburgh, Scotland, who saw under-excitement as the main cause of illnesses and emphasized the use of stimulants such as drugs and liquors.[24] Rush believed most debility resulted from excessive blood or over-stimulation, hence the use of de-stimulants such as bleeding.

The medical studies of the American Brunonians proved to their generation that woman had a peculiar sexual constitution which nature treated with a loathsome degree of cruelty by making her subject to all the diseases and sicknesses of man in addition to those peculiar to her sexual physique.[25] They affirmed her delicate constitution was equipped with a weak, unstable, and complex nervous system along which the "animal spirits" moved either with less vigor or rushed with greater force than in man. This frequent pressure wore her nerves out faster than those in man which made her irritable and unsteady. Furthermore, her sexual nature endowed her with superior sensibility which made her exquisite perception and quick imagination react spontaneously to external and internal stimuli. This ready susceptibility coupled with her weak nervous system kept her constitution precariously balanced at all times.[26]

The most trifling and unavoidable causes completely deranged her physique. For example, the intimate connection between the

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[24]Brown, p. vii.

[25]Hamilton, p. 62.

[26]Thomas Sydenham, The Works of Thomas Sydenham on Acute and Chronic Diseases (London: Printed for G. G. J. Robinson et al., 1788), I, 116.

feminine reproductive organs and her nervous system caused such things as menstruation, pregnancy, or an overwrought sensibility to directly unseat the nerves. An abnormal menstruation disrupted her health and unbalanced her reason; pregnancy and suckling predisposed her to a variety of maladies. These changes affected her moral attributes making her short tempered, irritable, and quarrelsome. The constitution of woman was so oppressively convalescent and tormented, said John Stewart in 1796, that when mankind advanced to an intellectual life--when the calculations of reason replaced instinct--, women would refuse to be mothers, and the human species would disappear. However, he optimistically hoped that medical discoveries would some day ease the pain of pregnancy and child-bearing and lessen the illnesses which plagued females.[27]

Menstruation certainly distinguished the female from the male. Its absence in men allowed them to grow stronger and larger,[28] said William Cheselden. Certain reasons were proposed to explain this phenomenon in women and why some menstruated more than others.

At the onset of puberty, explained John Brown, a great change took place in the whole feminine system. It was accompanied by a new commotion of the "animal spirits" which gathered strength by the mutual contact of the sexes in shaking hands, kissing, being in each other's

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[27] /John Stewart/, The Revelation of Nature with the Prophesy of Reason (New York: Mott and Lyon, 1796), pp. 58-60, in EAI no. 31238.

[28] William Cheselden, The Anatomy of the Human Body (1st American ed.; Boston: Manning and Loring for White et al., 1795), p. 275, in EAI no. 28413; John Bell, The Anatomy and Physiology of the Human Body (4th American ed.; New York: Collins and Company, 1822), III, 331-332.

presence, or eating together. As the impetuous flow of "animal spirits" increased in intensity, love in a healthy woman became more imperative and exquisite; coition sending the "animal spirits" spiraling to dizzy heights. The general distress of the body caused by the production of excess blood and compounded nervous energy gradually gathered near the womb where the turbulent excitement produced abnormal physical and emotional symptoms. At the apex of the excitement, nature removed the excess blood or stimulation by natural bleeding. Menstruation, then, returned the whole body to its normal condition.[29]

As further proof that stimulation caused menstruation, Brown pointed to the more frequent menstruation of woman than other females. He attributed this to their more frequent exposure to high degrees of stimuli. Among women, the one who was exposed to more erotic stimuli experienced stronger venereal emotion which greatly affected menstruation. Those less addicted to love menstruated less while those who gave way to that passion menstruated much more.[30]

An abundant menstruation short of the morbid state followed the immoderate operation of unchaste ideas and strong passion on the nerves. Conversation, books, and nude pictures kindled the whole frame of woman by arousing her lustful appetite and imagination. Rich foods, spices, and exercise increased the supply of blood, hence the volume of discharge.[31] Should a woman suffer from retarded menstruation, then rich food, generous drink, gestation, appropriate exercise, warm

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[29]Brown, pp. 294-296, 299.

[30]Ibid., pp. 296, 297.

[31]Ibid., p. 297.

bathing of the under-extremities, and gratification in love would rectify this deficiency.

As women advanced in years, these stimulants had less and less effect on her excitability until at last the gradually diminishing power of love and menstruation vanished altogether.[32]

The Brunonians considered pregnancy a disease of the female because of the irregular movements of the nervous fluid which accompanied it. Some doctors used blood-letting in an attempt to lessen the pains of pregnancy, menstruation, and parturition. One such doctor who found bleeding to be of special help reported that several women had painless deliveries once they had fainted from the loss of blood due to sufficient bleeding.[33]

The intimate relationship of the reproductive organs and the delicate nervous system gave birth to many other diseases. Albert von Haller described a sexual climax as "wonderfully debilitating," and very injurious to the nervous system as evident from the maladies arising from it.[34] Benjamin Rush continued the same theme by listing "inordinate sexual desires and gratifications" as a cause of madness

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[32] Ibid., pp. 297, 300, 302.

[33] William P. Dewees, "A Case of Difficult Parturition Successfully Terminated by Bleeding," The Medical Repository, ed. Samuel L. Mitchill, Edward Miller, and Elihu H. Smith (3d ed.; New York, 1805), II, 22-24; John Vaughan, "Four Articles," Ibid. (1801), IV, 427-428; Benjamin Rush, "On the Means of Lessening the Pains and Dangers of Childbearing, and of Preventing its Consequent Diseases," Ibid. (1803), VI, 26-31; John Vaughan, "An Inquiry into the Utility of Occasional Blood-letting in the Pregnant State of Disease," Ibid. (1803), VI, 31-37, 150-157.

[34] von Haller, p. 412.

and intellectual derangement.[35]

Combined with Rousseau's statement that the woman who made her pleasures rare would hold her lover, the association of insanity and inordinate sexual desires and gratifications may have caused many women to fear sexual relations and, in the absence of any standard of measurement, may have considered her normal sexual desires as dangerously excessive. It certainly was a prevalent belief that excessive sexual indulgences made prostitutes grow old quickly, that masturbation led to insanity, and that the sexual act beyond the need of procreation was harmful. This along with the view of man as a brute whom a normal woman could not satisfy without injury to her constitution possibly contributed to the emerging age of prudery with its unofficial sanction of houses of ill-repute. Furthermore, women may have experienced idealistic or platonic love for each other, but any lesbian activity among women who were firmly convinced of the close relationship of insanity and inordinate sexual gratification would have been extremely limited. Still in the train of conjecture, the normal sexual excitement caused by body chemistry and tissue "itch" may have made many women quarrelsome, restless, and disagreeable, especially when they realized their husbands were blessed with stronger sexual appetites and satisfied them in houses of prostitution without damage to their nervous systems. Such women may have looked with disgust on their own weak bodies which were "plagued" with more sexual urges than their constitutions could stand.

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[35]Benjamin Rush, Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind (facsimile of the 1812 Philadelphia ed.; New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 33, 347-356.

The supposed results of inordinate sexual desires and gratifications had more concrete expressions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Women were warned that constant attention to dress and personal adornment aroused the mind, inflamed the imagination, and over-excited the reproductive organs, which continuously upset the nervous system.[36] These passions numbed the reason, loosed the soul from its mooring, troubled the senses, stunned virtue, and destroyed reputation. Should this intermittent excitement continue for several years, it would cause a woman to go insane.

The conclusions of the Brunonians continued unabated into the nineteenth century. The causes of female diseases in 1850 coincided with those of the previous century. The list included a prolonged agitation of the blood and nerves by political excitement, secret maneuvers, illicit enjoyments, romantic fiction, jealousy, loss of fortune, secret sins, disappointment in love, domestic chagrin, frequent fits of passion, sudden deep joy, theatrical representations which excited the emotions, mental shock, and all the violent passions.[37] These pernicious influences preyed on the nerves of city women, especially those of the upper classes, who promptly took alarm at any supposed change in their social position and financial status which

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[36]The Lady's Pocket Library (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1792), pp. 198-199, in EAI no. 24452; Thomas Branagan, The Excellency of the Female Character Vindicated (2d ed.; Philadelphia: J. Rakestraw, 1808), pp. 175-180.

[37]Colombat de L'Isere, A Treatise on the Diseases and Special Hygiene of Females, trans. Charles D. Meigs (new ed., rev.; Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850), p. 72.

might threaten their family. This constant agitation of their sensibility and delicacy frequently ended in distress and sickness.[38]

Woman's sexual physique also determined the part she played in procreation. The innatists believed man provided the seed and woman furnished the haven for it. With the aid of the microscope, Albert von Haller described the male semen as composed of "seminal worms" which resembled the form of the first embryos of all animals. He concluded that these "little animals" constituted the complete human embryo, and the female added nothing to it.[39] However, women had this consolation: the fetus could only grow in the female. After all, said Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin, it would be unfair for man to furnish half of the embryo while woman produced the other half plus the haven, nutrients, and oxygenation. Since men were stronger, larger, and digested more food, their contribution should be more than that of the female.[40] And besides, the formation of Eve from the body of Adam proved that man was the sole source of life.[41]

It was noted that women did not propagate into old age as did men. The retention of the power of procreation in the male made him far superior to woman in the eyes of the innatists.[42] The implications of

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[38] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[39] von Haller, pp. 432-433.

[40] Erasmus Darwin, Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1796), p. 356, in EAI no. 30312.

[41] Ibid., p. 360.

[42] Cheselden, p. 277.

these medical facts also confirmed man as the giver or creator of human life.

However, a description of the vesicular sac which contained the ovum, by Regnier de Graaf, suggested that woman might produce eggs and thus contribute to the fetus.[43] Anatomists and others disagreed over the significance of this finding; they argued over who contributed more to the fetus--the man or the woman.[44] Some attributed everything to the male and others to the female. The latter searched for female semen to support their contentions.[45] Nevertheless, man was generally considered the sole possessor of the embryo of life until 1827 when Karl Ernst von Baer demonstrated that woman definitely produced eggs or true ova; thus she contributed substantially to the makeup of the fetus.[46] After this event more medical facts began to appear which could potentially raise the value of woman.

Nervous disorders revealed a sexual nature, wrote the leading American doctor, Benjamin Rush. By nature women went insane from natural causes while the male, being less affected by these, succumbed to artificial ones. Menstruation, pregnancy, and parturition[47] deranged women; bankruptcy, war, and drink predisposed men to

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[43]J. E. Schmidt, Medical Discoveries: Who and When (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1959), p. 342.

[44]Ibid., pp. 342, 195.

[45]von Haller, pp. 432-433; Darwin, Zoonomia . . ., pp. 357-361.

[46]Schmidt, p. 195.

[47]Rush, Medical Inquiries . . . of the Mind, p. 59.

madness.[48] Rush cited one woman whose madness occurred only during menstruation and who finally hung herself with the string of her petticoat in the midst of one of these spells. In the Bethleham Hospital from 1784 to 1794, he continued, 84 women went mad following parturition.[49]

In the division of nervous diseases, hysteria belonged to the female, and hypochondria, in a lesser extent, to the male. Beyond that, the classification of nervous disorders based on the sexual nature of woman was blurred. However, doctors claimed women frequently suffered more from nervous disorders than men.[50]

The original cause of this lay in their weaker nervous system. When the nervous fluid broke loose, it rushed in violent, irregular motions and in too copious amounts to a particular part of the body where it caused convulsions and pain.[51] A number of things helped to bring on such attacks: inactivity, a sedentary life, late hours, dissipation, excessive loss of blood, suppression or obstruction of the menstrual flow, unwholesome food, a constant low diet, and mental

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[48]Ibid., pp. 59-60; William Heberden, Commentaries on the History and Cure of Diseases (facsimile of the 1802 London ed.; New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1962), p. 276.

[49]Rush, Medical Inquiries . . . of the Mind, p. 59.

[50]Robert Whytt, Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of those Disorders which have been Commonly Called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysteric (3d ed.; Edinburgh: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1767), p. 116; Robert John Thornton, The Philosophy of Medicine (5th ed.; London: Printed for Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1813), II, 316-318.

[51]Sydenham, pp. 114-115; Peter Shaw, A New Practice of Physics (3d ed.; London: J. Osborn and T. Longman, 1730), II, 420.

aberrations such as extreme grief, anxiety, anger, jealousy, and disappointment in love.[52] For the innatist these facts substantiated the predisposition to insanity in woman more than in man.

The distinctive constitution of woman encouraged a separate field of medicine known as midwifery in the eighteenth century. Dominated by women and ignored by most doctors, it remained an inaccurate and unscientific part of American medicine. In the next century, midwifery underwent some drastic changes. The appearance of more professionally trained physicians gave it a degree of respect and scientific accuracy it had not known before; the general field of female medicine emerged as gynecology, midwifery as obstetrics, and a number of specialties began to appear.[53] However the objective remained the same--to adapt all treatment to woman's special sexual, moral, germinal,

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[52]James Thacker, American Modern Practice, of a Simple Method of Prevention and Cure of Diseases (Boston: Ezra Read, 1817), p. 528; Robert Thomas, The Modern Practice of Physics (2d American ed., rev.; New York: Collins and Co., 1813), p. 274; Sydenham, p. 106.

[53]A brief comparison of the older medical publications on women with those which emerged after 1845 will illustrate this change. Valentine Seaman, The Midwives' Monitor and Mother's Mirror (New York: Collins, 1800); Charles D. Meigs, Obstetrics: The Science and the Art (5th ed., rev.; Philadelphia: Henry C. Lea, 1873); Fleetwood Churchill, The Diseases of Females (5th ed., rev.; Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850); Elisha Cullen Dick, Doctor Dick's Instructions for the Nursing and Management of Lying-in Women (Alexandria: Thomas and Westcott, 1788); Charles White, A Treatise on the Management of Pregnant and Lying-in Women (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1773); Henry Bennett, A Practical Treatise on Inflammation of the Uterus and its Appendages and on Ulceration and Induration of the Neck of the Uterus (2d ed., enl.; Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850). The use of "midwifery" in the titles of medical books had practically disappeared by 1850. The more scientific medical study of woman and the less conjecture promised a better understanding of woman in the future.

gestative, and parturient nature.[54]

Conclusion

By the latter part of the eighteenth century, it was clearly established that an innate sexual nature permeated woman's physique and differentiated the bodies of the sexes.[55] The dependence of each sex upon the special attributes of the other instituted a natural physical equality and balance of power between them. Towards the end of the century, woman took more pride than shame in the distinctive nature of her physique and expected men to give her honor as the weaker vessel.[56]

Her special sexual constitution made her more prone to physical debility since her weaker nervous system could not handle the same stimulation as could that of man. Under the influence of constant excitement, her body and mind succumbed to a variety of maladies. Being more nervous, impressionable, and imaginative, she needed to avoid those stimuli which overheated the nervous system. Last, as more physicians took an interest in the special sexual physique of woman, the evolution of female medicine was assured.

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[54]Charles D. Meigs, Females and their Diseases (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1848), p. 37.

[55]Rousseau, pp. 321, 412; More, p. 2; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 101, 161; Hitchcock, II, 43, 55; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 8, 10; Gisborne, p. 14.

[56]Rousseau, pp. 322-326; Hitchcock, II, 47; Gisborne, p. 14.

CHAPTER III

THE MIND OF WOMAN

The Innate Sexual Mind of Woman

Implicit in the concept of woman's innate sexual physique was that of a sexual mind. The resulting mental diseases which followed constant overstimulation of her delicate nervous system made her brain as susceptible to the harmful effects of nervous agitation as her other organs, explained the innatist. If woman had a strong mind, it would overwork her nervous system and overtax her weak body which could not protect the mind from overstimulation; the soft muscles would not absorb enough of the stimuli but passed them directly to the nerves.[1] Dr. Benjamin Rush demonstrated that physical distress was passed on to the brain where it disrupted the operation of its faculties.[2] At the same time a Harvard Disputation decided the difference between an idiot and a wise man lay in the construction of their bodily organs.[3] Hence

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[1]Henry Home, Lord Kames, Six Sketches on the History of Man (Philadelphia: Bell and Aitken, 1776), p. 195, in EAI no. 14801; /John Bennett/, Strictures on Female Education (Norwich: Ebenezer Bushnell, 1792), p. 96, in EAI no. 24094.

[2]Benjamin Rush, Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind (facsimile of the 1812 Philadelphia ed.; New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 17, 47-48, 61; Benjamin Rush, An Oration . . . Containing an Enquiry into the Influence of Physical Causes upon the Moral Faculty (Philadelphia: Charles Cist, 1786), pp. 4, 5, 9, 17ff, in EAI no. 19972.

[3]Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (3d ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 158.

the innatists concluded that a sexed mind in woman went hand-in-hand with her weak physique.

The evidence of the sexual nature of woman's mental make-up was not limited to medical knowledge. Sufficient support was found in the first book of the Bible. It told the story of God creating a special feminine mind by taking woman from a part of man closer to his heart than to his mind. He gave her more of the "heart" or moral faculties than He did of the mind or mental faculties.[4] It may be supposed that Satan tempted her instead of man, explained a Biblical commentator, because the "weaker vessel" was inferior to Adam in knowledge, mental awareness, and strength of mind. Had she not strayed from Adam, she would have been less vulnerable to this sinister subtlety.[5]

Later, St. Paul told women to ask their husbands if they wanted to know anything.[6] And in Paradise Lost, a popular version of the creation in the eighteenth century, John Milton pictured the sexes receiving different mental and moral gifts.

> 'For Contemplation He, and valour form'd;
> 'For softness She, and sweet attractive grace.'[7]

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[4]Gen. 1: 26, 27; 2: 18-25.

[5]William Jenks (ed.), The Comprehensive Commentary on the Holy Bible (Brattleboro: Fessenden and Co., 1835), I, 31; John Gillies, Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield (Middletown: Hunt and Noyes, 1837), p. 314; Thomas Scott, The Holy Bible . . . with Explanatory Notes (new ed.; London: James Nisbet and Co., 1866), I, an explanation of Gen. 3: 6 (unpaged).

[6]I Cor. 14: 34-35.

[7]John Milton, Paradise Lost (Philadelphia: Yound and James, 1787), I, 97, in EAI no. 20525.

The argument from nature affirmed that each sex had mental abilities which suited his or her place in the great scale of being. What few similarities existed were overshadowed by the greater differences between the feminine and masculine minds.[8] Rousseau summarized this belief when he said a man and a woman were no more alike in mind than in face.[9] Hence each sex excelled in its respective realm by developing its special mental gifts.

The different faculties of the sexes had distinct locations and operations in this psychological arrangement. The mental powers were located in the head and were the source of thought while the moral powers were located in the heart and were the source of emotions.[10] The heart belonged to woman and the head to man; she excelled in character and he in the mind. Her intellectual powers and moral perceptivity,

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[8]James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (new ed.; Philadelphia, 1787), pp. 101, 167, 168, 307, 316, in EAI no. 20362; Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London, 1798), p. 15, in EAI no. 33801; Hannah More, Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies (Philadelphia, 1789), pp. 4, 5, 6, in EAI no. 19810; Benjamin Franklin, Reflections on Courtship and Marriage (Philadelphia, 1746), pp. 30-31, in EAI no. 5772; James Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women (1st American ed.; Boston, 1781), p. 41, in EAI no. 19408; Enos Hitchcock, Memoirs of the Bloomsgrove Family (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), II, 25, in EAI no. 22570; Noah Webster, A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), pp. 410-411, in EAI no. 23053; The Lady's Pocket Library (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1792), pp. 191, 232, in EAI no. 24452; /Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert/, The Ladies Friend (New Haven: Abel-Morse, 1789), pp. 18-19, in EAI no. 21708.

[9]Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1911), p. 322.

[10]The moral powers of woman's heart will be discussed in Chapter IV, "The Character of Woman."

then, were as feminine as her reproductive organs.[11]

This dichotomy depicted woman as created for sensibility and man for reason; woman to be emotional, man to be logical; woman to please, man to inform; woman for compassion, man for justice; woman for mercy, man for judgment. She was sentimental, enthusiastic, and excitable while man was factual, persistent, and patient. She possessed moral insight, and he had wisdom and knowledge. The feeling part of mankind was feminine; the thinking part of mankind was masculine.[12]

The Limited Female Mind

Her sexual nature set limits to her mind and gave it an innate pattern of development. To go beyond these limits violated the orderly scheme of things, said the innatists. Although environmental influences could not force the different mental powers and capacities of either sex into alternate patterns of development, the wrong ones could disrupt their development. A masculine environment could not make a female mind a male one; a feminine environment could not destroy the essence of reason in a male.[13]

This meant that woman had the mental faculties in different

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[11]John Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners (3d ed.; Dublin, 1794), lecture xi, in EAI no. 26722.

[12]Fordyce, Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, p. 46; More, pp. 3-6; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 101, 161-162, 167-168, 307, 316; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 136, 191, 232; Gisborne, pp. 14-15.

[13]Rousseau, p. 338; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 316; Hitchcock, I, 66, 82, 124; Gisborne, pp. 27, 141; Fordyce, Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, p. 46; More, pp. 62-63; Bennett, pp. 91-92, 100.

quantities and quality from her counterpart. The power of her mind instantaneously produced superficial ideas, and her warm, vigorous imagination embellished them with a sense of urgency. Superior judgment, meticulous discrimination, profound thinking, and accurate investigations belonged to man. The occasional man who possessed a high degree of imagination had proportionately less of the substantial faculties, said the innatist. The mental difference, then, between the sexes lay in the strength and operation of their faculties.[14]

The mental faculties of woman which received a great deal of attention in the eighteenth century were reason, imagination, invention, memory, wit, curiosity, and imitation.

Reason

The innatists believed feminine reason was less sophisticated than masculine reason. Simple and practical, it could not arrive at close or precise decisions; hence feminine judgment could not be trusted. It instinctively resisted that which it could not comprehend--the fine points of law, the depths of theology, the abstractions of mathematics, and the meticulous measurements, observations, and generalizations of science. The intricies of business and the financial world slipped past her grosser reason; and medicine shocked its modesty. Feminine reason enthusiastically embraced embroidery, the art of cooking, routine household tasks, having and loving children, the wash-tub, the noisy gossip-circle, the hymnal and catechism, shopping, and the variegated

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[14]Bennett, pp. 94-95; William Alexander, The History of Woman from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time (Philadelphia: J. H. Dobelbower, 1796), II, 75, 76, in EAI no. 29964.

flower-bed.[15]

Although the innatists disagreed over the degree of rationality which woman had, they tended to fall into two general groups. The first claimed that woman lacked solid reason and good sense. The second said that woman could be trained to think, to inquire, and to be rational within the limits of her feminine mind. However, neither group believed the sexes shared the reasoning powers equally.[16]

Imagination

Imagination was woman's faculty par excellence and when properly cultivated, it benefited herself and society. Innatists, aware of the power of her native gaiety, quickness, and vivacity, warned against their overuse: they would create an unsteady mind, a fondness for novelty, habits of frivolousness, and a low estimation of her own worth. This unruly faculty encouraged an unquenchable thirst for wit, shining accomplishments, admiration, applause, vanity, and affection which rendered her fickle, capricious, and irritable,[17] especially if she were doing nothing worthwhile. It often stood between her and the truth, explained the innatist, for when it held sway, reason dared not show

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[15]Hitchcock, II, 25; Rousseau, pp. 340, 345-347, 389; Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, Letters (3d ed.; New York: Rivington and Gaine, 1775), pp. 192-193, in EAI no. 14471; More, pp. 3-4; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 162; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 191-192; Franklin, p. 20; Bennett, pp. 98-99.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Hester Mulso Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady (5th ed.; Worcester, 1783), II, 195, in EAI no. 17869; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 193; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 19, 101; Burton, p. 98; Gisborne, pp. 23-24.

itself. Its spell caused a woman to see what she wanted to see rather than what actually was happening; hence it was the main source of her suffering and pain.[18] Eventually such a woman gave herself entirely to dissipation.

Nevertheless, woman needed a degree of imagination, said the innatists, or much of her pleasure in life would be destroyed. Once she developed control of this sprightly faculty, the pleasures of life would come her way while she was protected from the sordid and vulgar in life.[19]

Invention

Woman's sexual nature limited her inventive faculty to a few feminine literary novelties and a feminine style in secular art. A female genius appeared once in a while, but women in general lacked the unremitting assiduity to pursue and discover basic truths. Their physique could not handle the strain, and their mind rebelled against the excess labor required for works of genius. Even when this rare faculty favored a woman, its rapid penetration lacked the persistence to fully equal that in man. The fact that genius did appear occasionally in a woman only proved to the innatist that woman possessed little of this faculty.[20]

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[18] The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 193.

[19] /Mrs. Peddle/, Rudiments of Taste (Chambersburg, Pa.: Doves and Harper, 1797), p. 6, in EAI no. 32643; More, pp. 3, 77ff; Erasmus Darwin, A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education (Philadelphia, 1798), p. 32, in EAI no. 33601.

[20] Letter from Aaron Burr to Mrs. Burr, February 15, 1793, in Matthew L. Davis, Memoirs of Aaron Burr (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1855), I, 362; Sketches of the History, Genius, Disposition, Accomplishments, Employments, Customs and Importance of the Fair Sex (Philadelphia:

Memory

The most useful mental ability of woman was her memory. When well-trained and full of facts, it constituted perfection in female education and allowed her to carry on delightful conversation, be charming and graceful, to establish herself among the unmarried males. A moderate amount of memory work did not overwork her mind, or aggravate her delicate nerves, or permit her to outshine any man in speculative theories and thus to gain a reputation for having knowledge unbecoming a woman. This habituation taught her what to do at all times, although she did not necessarily know why she did it. But she need never worry, for man was there to tell her the "whys" of life. Her education, social position, chances of marriage, behavior, and decorum all rested on a well-disciplined memory in eighteenth century America.[21]

Wit

Wit, whether cunning, humorous, wise, or satirical, was the most dangerous talent a woman could possess.[22] Although perfectly compatible with delicacy and softness, it seldom united with them. Great discretion was necessary to prevent cunning wit from concocting selfish schemes, intrigues, and mental fabrications which scourged the home and society. Too many women at every level of society, claimed

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Samuel Sansom, 1796?), pp. 95-96, in EAI no. 31688. See John Paul Pritchard, Criticism in America (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), pp. 31-32.

[21] Sketches . . . of the Fair Sex, p. 98.

[22] The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 95; Rousseau, p. 335; Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language (3d ed., corrected; London, 1766), II (unpaged).

one author, resorted to deception to conceal their pursuit of power, money, revenge, and mischief. Consequently affectation pervaded social gatherings, stymied the relationship of husband and wife, created distrust between women, made friendships between women virtually impossible, and encouraged such women to further their political ambitions. The "left-handed wisdom" of craftiness made women unfeminine by pushing an obliquity and in impotency which unsexed the noble feminine mind.[23]

As the female sex became synonymous with designing wit in eighteenth century America, women gained a reputation for possessing an overabundance of cunning wit and a natural disposition to use it indiscriminately. Once they desired some thing, they would not rest until they possessed it; their modus operandi of preposterous, maddening tricks led them to tempt men to disobey God, to be faithless husbands, and poor fathers. If it were necessary they even brought men to utter ruin. Nothing, said one author, tended more to the destruction of youth or rendered them incapable of seeing where their lives should go than the affected conversation of intriguing women.

A great deal of literature for women advised them to forego the illicit pleasures of wit. Men of good sense and uprightness, they were informed, looked upon their spider-web-like schemes with a mixture of mirth, pity, indifference, and sometimes warm indignation. A cultivated feminine mind never relied on feminine wiles to entertain people or to obtain reasonable things from their husbands. The

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[23]Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 345.

dignity of a woman measureably increased in the world the moment she stopped her childish tricks.[24]

At least two writers varied substantially from their contemporaries in their view on feminine wit. James Fordyce opposed it as strongly as others but claimed the stronger masculine mind had more of it than the feminine one. Man schemed and intrigued on a much larger and bolder scale than women. In the quest to gratify his avarice, ambition, and senses, man outdid the grandest tactics of women.[25] Both sexes needed to restrain their cunning wit.

Jean Jacques Rousseau extolled feminine cunning wit. Although a blessing in disguise, it had to be cultivated along with the other faculties to savor its wildness. Properly trained, it could protect woman from the stronger male, turn love-making from the brutal into the moral, help woman fulfill her role as man's helpmate, prevent him from tyrannizing her, maintain her "natural equality" with him, and teach her to rule in obedience.

In the view of Rousseau nature gave women beauty and wiles as armor in this life. Since beauty was not universal but faded with age and could be damaged by accident, cunning wit was her chief weapon to control man's strength, render the home happy, give charm to society,

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[24]Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, pp. 33-34; Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Boston, 1786), p. 2, in EAI no. 20119; Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Haverhill, 1794), pp. 34-35, in EAI no. 29829 (These two books vary in length and content and will be cited hereafter by the author and date of publication); Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 192.

[25]Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, pp. 34-35.

restrain the brutal husband, and check the petulant child. When Rousseau had finished discussing cunning wit, he had exalted it to the status of a natural law.[26]

The sexual nature of woman made it difficult for her to develop humorous and satirical wit. The excesses to which she carried her stinging retorts, witty ridicules, and her will to have the last word alienated male admirers and made her the scourge of female company. In what worse state could a woman be? asked the innatists. Propriety demanded she guard against such an unruly faculty.[27]

Curiosity

The natural curiosity of woman gave knowledge beyond her mental ability a bewitching charm, enhanced the pleasure of intrigue, loosened the bands on the imagination, and hid the dangers of going beyond her proper sphere. The boldness thus engendered had to be dampened in childhood if she were to learn the knowledge, duties, and responsibilities suited to her physique and mind. Then, and only then, would her curiosity perform its proper function.[28]

Imitation

The faculty of imitation made woman quick to discern and to conform to the wishes, desires, and examples of those with whom she

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[26]Rousseau, pp. 323, 334, 335.

[27]Sketches . . . of the Fair Sex, pp. 127-128.

[28]/William Kendrick/, The Whole Duty of Woman (Philadelphia: Crukshank, 1788), pp. 8-9, in EAI no. 21184; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 190-191; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 194; Rousseau, p. 332; Boudier de Villemert, p. 19.

lived. In youth this instinct was prone to error since she feared the disapproval of others by falling short of their standards in a single thing. When this propensity coincided with high spirits, inexperience of the world, an undisciplined imagination, and cunning wit, woman often ventured into inauspicious and sometimes forbidden areas. To protect the imitative propensity, females had to be taught self-restraint, obedience and submission to custom, to parents, and to their husbands after marriage.[29]

Taken collectively the mental powers of woman lacked the vigor and persistence to conduct the activities and attain the achievements of those in man. The theoretic sciences, profound research, "knotty investigations," scholarly literature, and abstract philosophy were products of the masculine mind, hence beyond her ability. Occupations such as war, banking, commerce, industry, and the professions, which required greater powers of investigation, foresight, and reasoning also belonged to the more active and enterprising male. Her weaker physique and softer mind broke down under the strain required to discover and formulate abstract and speculative truths in theology, principles in science, axioms in philosophy, and broad generalizations in history. She had neither the accuracy nor the attention to succeed in the physical and biological sciences which studied the laws of nature and the relationships between living creatures. What she needed was more energy, more strength, a wider range of vision, and a different disposition before attempting to discover scientific truth and produce

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[29]Hitchcock, I, 12, II, 16-17; Gisborne, pp. 84, 98; Rousseau, pp. 321, 322, 328ff.

creative works. Her practical reason was best suited to apply the principles which men discovered.[30]

Nature designed the quickly enervated body and limited range of observation of the female for the study of the people around her. Her exquisite feminine perception discovered and examined the passions of men which she could use to accomplish those things which she could not do by herself. However, this was not an abstract but a practical knowledge of the mind and feelings of the men immediately around her--her husband, brothers, father, and sons.

Once their feelings and motives were discerned from their speech, actions, looks, and gestures, she could move them to action by the many natural gifts given her for this purpose. By a subtle transfer of her feelings to these men, she could encourage the observations which led to the discovery of principles. In other words, woman read more accurately the heart of man while he reduced these ideas to a philosophy; she discovered an experimental morality, and he systematized it. In this way woman played a vital role in the discovery of knowledge beyond her capacities.[31]

The difference between the feminine and masculine mind clearly revealed itself in the literature which each wrote. The lively imagination, taste, and exquisite perceptions of the beautiful in woman

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[30]Franklin, pp. 30-31; Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, p. 41; More, pp. 3, 6; Hitchcock, II, 25; Boudier de Villemert, p. 18; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 191, 232; Gisborne, pp. 169, 199; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 101, 161, 167-168; Rousseau, pp. 350, 373.

[31]Rousseau, p. 350; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 162.

produced beautiful, soft, delicate, simple, and pure literary works; the masculine used sublimity, nervousness, grandeur, dignity, and force in his. Woman liked point, turn, and antithesis while man liked observation and a just deduction of effects from their causes. Although the skill needed for poetry was held in common by both, wrote Hannah More, Woman seldom reached the same quality of poetic sense as did man.[32]

The romances written by woman pretended to describe real life and actual events with an elevation of narrative which made them exciting, natural, and uncommon. They stirred tender feelings by pathetic representations of those minute, endearing, domestic circumstances which ensnared the emotions, making reflection ineffectual. Feminine literature amused rather than instructed; any instruction was done indirectly by short inferences drawn from a long chain of circumstances.[33]

The social behavior of the sexes was also an index to their sexual minds. Women generally had quicker perceptions, men juster sentiments; women used pretty expressions, men proper ones; women generally reflected as they spoke, men before they spoke; women conversed to shine and please, men to convince and confute; women admired brilliance, men solidarity; women preferred an extemporaneous sally of wit and glittering effusion of fancy, men the most accurate reasoning and laborious investigation of facts; women loved incident,

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[32]More, pp. 3, 4, 5.

[33]Ibid., p. 5.

men argument; women admired passionately, men approved cautiously. Women believed moderate applause betrayed a just appreciation while men considered raptuous expressions a sign of poor judgment. Women gave way to the emotions they actually felt while men refused any emotional display beyond what the occasion justified.[34]

The sexual nature of the feminine mind had other significances. Nature made women mentally dependent upon man. Her source of truth lay in the simple principles and facts which she could deduce from the observations of life around her. But for the deeper and more comprehensive truths which tied together the complexity of facts which collectively made up life, she had to rely upon man.[35]

She was expected to accept what she was told, then to deduce lesser truths from it. The advice of St. Paul was applied quite literally to women in America.

> Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.[36]

> And if they /women/ will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home . . .[37]

Nature, in giving woman the strong instinct to imitate those over her, made it easy for her to accept the ideas and views of her husband.

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[34] Ibid., p. 4.

[35] Rousseau, pp. 328, 340; More, p. 62; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 225.

[36] I Tim. 2: 11-12. The Epistles of St. Paul were considered as the guide to feminine duties. See Chapone, I, 69; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 32; Ward (1794), p. 63; Gisborne, p. 6.

[37] I Cor. 14: 35.

He alone had the pleasure of teaching his wife everything. As his scholar, her responsibility was to share his ideas, habits, and tastes, not to teach or reform him. The unsteadiness of her feminine judgment made the husband the head of his wife as Christ was the head of the church.[38]

Much of the pains of mental adjustment during marriage could be avoided by attaining a union of minds before marriage, wrote Benjamin Franklin. The stronger reason and more experience in man pointed naturally to his dominance and the need for his wife to follow his lead. The man should choose a partner with a similar mental make-up, he added, or a woman should accept the hand of a man with superior mental faculties.[39]

Later in the century, Noah Webster added that a man took pride in the deference his wife gave to his opinions and often loved her even if she were not fully informed because it created a kind of dependence upon his judgment. And a wife always despised her husband whose knowledge and understanding were inferior to hers, and was especially chagrined at his behavior among men of superior talents. These facts, Webster said, justified the ordering of society around the mental differences of the sexes.[40]

The innatists considered the woman who thought it a disgrace

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[38]Eph. 5: 33, 22, 24; Col. 3: 18; Titus 2: 5; I Pet. 3: 1, as used by Gisborne, pp. 165, 170, 184-185; Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, pp. 22, 31; Rousseau, p. 373.

[39]Franklin, pp. 8, 14, 27.

[40]Webster, p. 411.

to be less capable in the more difficult fields of knowledge ignorant of the fact that the female mind gained its honor and recognition from qualities other than those extraordinary abilities of man. Those who demanded mental equality did not understand the natural order and laws ordained by God, said the innatists, which necessitated mental inequality between the sexes for the continuance of society.

The reasons were simple. First, the happiness of each sex depended in a great measure upon the preservation and observance of their antithetical but complementary natures. Without opposite mental natures, the superior pleasure which resulted from mixed social intercourse would be exchanged for a tedious, insipid uniformity. No longer would the rough angles and asperities of the male be imperceptibly polished by the refining taste of females or the ideas of woman acquire solid strength from sensible, intelligent, and judicious man.[41]

Furthermore, if fame constituted the goal of each sex, women could gain it easier as women than as men. The path marked out by nature, custom, and education made them glow while a diametrically opposite path made them awkward.[42] It was better to be originals and excellent women, said the innatists, than poor imitations or bumbling men.[43]

Second, mental inequality would protect mankind from a perpetually

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[41]More, p. 6.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

vicious struggle of the sexes which would eventually destroy the human race. The present social relations of the sexes produced a moral person of which woman was the eye and man the hand. He taught her what to see and she taught him how to use what she saw. Should she be able to discover principles and he come to love detail, their independence would make life hazardous for each other. But from their mutual dependence arose harmony, common purpose, and societal benefits, each commanding and obeying the other.[44]

Third, the sexual division of minds inadvertantly produced intellectual progress. The compound of feminine wit and masculine genius, of feminine observation and masculine reason discovered the most profound knowledge possible.[45] By this process, the human race advanced in knowledge and intellectual skills which would otherwise be greatly hindered, if not thrown backward.

Fourth, by assigning one partner pre-eminence over the other, Providence tried to prevent constant bickering, quarreling, and scheming in families. Man received this glory since his sphere required the greater exertions, the deeper reflection, stronger powers of investigation, and more comprehensive foresight and judgment. Likewise, the female mind had no rival in sprightliness, vivacity, cheerfulness, quickness of perception, fertility of invention, and the ability to smooth the wrinkled brow of the male.[46]

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[44]Rousseau, p. 340.

[45]Ibid., p. 350.

[46]Gisborne, pp. 169, 15; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 167.

Last, the glory of the female sex, said Thomas Gisborne, consisted of modesty, delicacy, sensibility, spontaneous benevolence, warm tender attachment, and the most amiable affections. Such qualities undimmed in the darkness of barbarism shone as a beacon to guide mankind towards a better life.[47] Without these feminine moral faculties, mankind would have been lost forever in the abyss of ignorance and barbarism.

Conclusion

Eighteenth century America believed the intellectual powers of woman were as feminine as her physique. The physiological and medical argument stated that a delicate body meant a delicate mind; the religious argument claimed that God gave woman less mind than man; the scientific argument said that each sex was given sufficient mind for its respective place in the great scale of beings. And since woman was lower in the scale than man, she had less need for the strong mental powers than man. The consequent division of the mental and moral faculties between the sexes gave sensibility to woman and reason to man.

The concept of the limited feminine mind necessitated mapping its exact perimeter in order to know its functions and powers. Hers was more practical than intellectual, theoretical or philosophical. Her reason was simple; her imagination tended towards instability; her invention produced some literary novelties; her genius rarely appeared; her memory was the most useful of her mental faculties; and her wit, if

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[47]Gisborne, p. 15.

properly controlled, had the most salubrious results. However, if her wit remained undisciplined, it made her crafty, cunning, unethical, untrustworthy, and a shrew. In a similar manner, undisciplined curiosity tempted woman to seek knowledge and experience beyond her capacity. Finally, feminine imitation made her quick to discern and follow the wishes of the people around her, especially her husband.

The sources of truth for woman lay in those simple conclusions which she could gain from everyday experiences and in the deeper truths received from man. By this means, her mental dependence on man was made complete.

Mental inequality rather than equality was the law of nature. The intent of nature was clear in the matter by making the happiness of the sexes dependent upon the antithetical but complementary nature of their minds and by stifling the possible vicious struggle of the sexes which mental equality could engender. The intellectual progress of mankind depended on the pre-eminence of one sex. Finally, mental inequality started mankind on the long road from barbarism to civilization.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHARACTER OF WOMAN

The Innate Character of Woman

Beginning with Eve, woman inherited the inescapable fate of always being female, wrote the innatists.[1] The precipitable difference between her and man lay in her timid, retiring, fearful, and modest character and in her reliance on the dictates of sensibility. Her character, then, like her physique and mind, reflected her sexual nature.[2]

The Innate Character of Woman in Transition

The discussions of the influence of woman's character on

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[1]Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1911), pp. 321, 331-332, 339; Hannah More, Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies (Philadelphia, 1786), p. 62, in EAI no. 19810; James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (new ed.; Philadelphia, 1787), pp. 62, 308, 310, in EAI no. 20362; /William Kendrick/, The Whole Duty of Woman (Philadelphia: Crukshank, 1788), Matthew Carey, 1792), pp. 180-182, in EAI no. 24452; Noah Webster, A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), pp. 406, 410, 413, in EAI no. 23053; Enos Hitchcock, Memoirs of the Bloomsgrove Family (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), II, 16, 29, 43-44, 47, in EAI no. 22570; John Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners (3d ed.; Dublin, 1794), pp. 102, 110, in EAI no. 26722; /Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert/, The Ladies Friend (New Haven: Abel-Morse, 1789), p. 86, in EAI no. 21708; Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London, 1798), pp. 14-15, in EAI no. 33801.

[2]Henry Home, Lord Kame, Six Sketches on the History of Man (Philadelphia: Bell and Aitken, 1776), p. 195, in EAI no. 14801.

society went through several stages in the eighteenth century. The satires and scurrilous invectives which dominated most of the century led to a reaction after the 1760's which reflected a more generous appraisal of her character. By the end of the century, some literature began to challenge, among other things, the fundamental belief about woman--her sexual character.

The first trend emphasized the "badness" of woman's character; the second explored the "goodness" and commented on the "badness" of a few stray women; and the last advanced a new theory of woman's character.[3]

Woman as Essentially and Innately Evil

With the presumption of an essentially and innately evil nature permeating woman's character, the possibility of her doing good was highly questionable. She introduced sin and evil into the world, the innatist said, and since then had promoted all the evils in the world. Eve succumbed to temptation first, as a consequence of the grosser material used during her creation. When she found that Adam stubbornly refused to eat the forbidden fruit, she made a cudgel from a branch of the tree of knowledge, so went the story, and after a due amount of persuasion convinced him to taste the fruit.[4]

Another legend used by the innatists to illustrate woman's evil

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[3]See Chapter XII for the last trend.

[4]Sketches of the History, Genius, Disposition, Accomplishments, Employments, Customs and Importance of the Fair Sex (Philadelphia: Samuel Sansom, 1796?), p. 2, in EAI no. 31688.

nature concerned Cain and Abel and their twin sisters. Adam thought it best for his sons to marry those least related to them, thus ordered the boys to marry each other's sister. Cain refused because his twin was prettier. In order to settle the dispute, Adam submitted it to the Lord who condemned Cain's desire. This made Cain so angry that he slew his brother. Thus, concluded the innatists, a woman was the cause of the first argument, which provoked the first murder, and introduced death into the world.[5]

No wonder her dominant character traits suited one half-way between the animal and human kingdoms. These were vanity, pride, sexual passion, inconstancy, dissimulation, affectation, hatred and revenge, love of flattery and adulation, personal beauty, fickleness, loquacity, love of assiduity, gullibility, insatiability, coquetry, extremity, craftiness and artfulness, licentiousness, forwardness, lust, ambition, deceit, falsehood, gossip, and the love of power and wealth. She was also ungrateful, perjured, fraudulent, waspish, toyish, light, sullen, discourteous, and cruel.[6]

In the words of Alexander Pope, a giant literary figure of the

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[5] Ibid.; William Alexander, The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time (Philadelphia: J. H. Dobelbower, 1796), I, 28, in EAI no. 29964.

[6] Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Boston, 1795), p. 39, in EAI no. 28022, see also pp. 31, 35, 40, 52, 58; Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, Letters (3d ed.; New York: Rivington and Gaine, 1775), I, 124, 192-193, II, 67, 158, 190, 207, III, 75-76, in EAI no. 14471; Rousseau, pp. 332, 334, 335ff; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 324, 227; Cotton Mather, Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion (Cambridge: Samuel Phillips, 1692), p. 43, in EAI no. 624; John Bartlett, Physiognomy, a Poem (Boston: John Russell, 1799), pp. 12-13, in EAI no. 35158.

eighteenth century, every woman was a rake at heart.[7] The traits of humility, gentleness, meekness, obedience and submission, modesty, and virtue were either missing or present in such small amounts that they were ineffectual. Every woman wanted to be thought beautiful, to be mistress of many servants, and to love without restraint. They liked to empty a man's purse and laugh in his face before they cut his throat. They loved to be scornful in looks, haughty in speech, arrogant in silence, raging in anger, frantic in sorrow, honest in appearance, dissolute in riots, insolently proud, unrestrained by any moral code at parties, eager to do ill, impatient to endure the same, hesitant to obey, eager to command, able to shun good deeds, immovable to pardon, delirious for vengence, ambitious to play the lady at all times, and anxious to be pompous in society. Men reacted to them as the man who listened to his minister tell the congregation to take up their cross and follow him if they wanted to be saved. Straightway after the services he went to the minister with his wife upon his back and said, "I have taken up my cross and am ready to follow thee."[8]

Women used their faces as lures, their beauty as baits, their looks as nets, and their words as charms to enslave men, said the innatists. It was almost impossible for a man to master one without debauchery, thereby becoming a vassal to her pride and lusts. It was

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[7]Alexander Pope, Epistles to Several Persons, ed. F. W. Bateson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 65.

[8]Ward, pp. 31, 39, 46-47; /Mrs. Peddle/, Rudiments of Taste (Chambersburg, Pa.: Dover and Harper, 1797), pp. 9-10, in EAI no. 32643.

best to heed the advice of St. Paul on marriage--it was better for a man not to marry.[9] Those who married eventually felt like the man on his death bed who was asked by a friend where he wanted to go. He asked in reply where did they suppose his deceased wife had gone? To heaven was the answer. Then, said the man, any place will be fine so long as I do not have to suffer the presence of my wife. Or like the husband whose friends asked how he felt about the tragic, but accidental hanging of his wife when she was picking fruit. He answered, "I wish all trees would bear such fruit."[10]

When woman "reigned," vanity replaced virtue; avarice, ambition and pride overshadowed justice, temperance, and modesty.[11] Hence she had to be confined at home if man wished to dry up the fountain of evils. To assure their faithfulness after marriage, they should not depart from home except to attend church and to perform certain carefully selected charities.[12]

Their capricious character prevented a man from confiding a

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[9]I Cor. 7: 7-9, as used by Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Haverhill, 1794), pp. 50, 59, in EAI no. 29829. See also pp. 43, 44; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 231.

[10]Ward (1794), p. 46.

[11]John Knox, The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regimen of Women (Philadelphia: Andrew Stewart, 1766), p. 17, in EAI no. 10249.

[12]Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Boston, 1786), p. 10, in EAI no. 20119; Ward (1795), p. 30; Ward (1794), pp. 42-43 (These books have the same title but vary in the material included); The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 228; Pope, pp. 44-71.

serious matter or holding a serious conversation with any female, even his wife. They were not consistent long enough to be rational. One hour they were happy, the next hour sad; laugh now, cry then. What they liked today, they despised tomorrow and looked upon with indifference the next day. There was nothing so good as what a woman liked and nothing so bad as that which she disliked. How could a man expect sound advice from such instability and extremity? asked the innatists. How could a man know when feminine advice was sincere or when stimulated to achieve some "mad trick"? Women, not men, debased the relationship of the sexes and degraded society.[13]

Characteristically, they knew no middle ground. Extreme in everything, their enthusiasm made them either angels or devils. They either loved dearly or hated mortally; their love had no reason, their revenge no pity, and their anger no patience. Therefore, nothing pleased or displeased men more than women. They most delighted and most deceived men, making every man miserable in the end. The only way to make women moderate was to teach them submission. However, one male author believed that women would never be taught humility by blows, except they be beaten to death. Take the case of the wife who chattered and harangued her husband so much that one day he cut her tongue out, said Edward Ward. Did that stop her? No! She made the sign of the gallows to him with her hands.[14]

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[13]Chesterfield, pp. 192-193; Ward (1795), pp. 34-35; Rousseau, p. 333; Benjamin Franklin, Reflections on Courtship and Marriage (Philadelphia, 1746), p. 2, in EAI no. 5772.

[14]Ward (1795), pp. 35, 41, 50; Ward (1794), p. 46.

Her evil bent forced her husband to be ever vigilent. Should he be over-credulent of her virtue, his faith would have many trials, for many wives viewed marriage as a license and a husband as a screen for their clandestine sexual adventures. It was easy, the innatists said, to gain a woman's love, but difficult to preserve it. Like vinegar, it could never be reduced to its primitive goodness, hence always remained sour.[15]

Formal education beyond a knowledge of domestic tasks, accomplishments, and the catechism harmed her mind and increased the evil proclivity of her character. She should never be free to choose her religion or to explore deep theological principles, said the innatists. Punctual and unquestioning obedience to her faith would go far to convince her husband of her worthy character.[16]

Lord Chesterfield, an eminent socialite in England and a chief proponent of feminine evilmindedness, reduced their character to the traits of vanity and love. These overshadowed all other attributes and caused women in general to worry over one object, their beauty. They were pleased best by the man who flattered them most and loved him best whom they thought most in love with them. Scarcely any flattery of their beauty seemed too gross for them to swallow; and no adulation was too strong, no assiduity too long, or simulation of passion too forward. Rare, indeed, was a woman ugly enough to be insensible to the flattery of her person, he said. However, the least word or action

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[15]Rousseau, p. 352; Ward (1786), pp. 10-11.

[16]Rousseau, pp. 340-344.

which they might interpret as a slight was unpardonable and was never forgiven.[17] They sought out the man who received the highest praise from his fellow men. They crowded around such an irresistible person, quarreling over who would be first to brave the dangers of a triumph. Such a conquest flattered their vanity.[18]

Personal vanity drove them to time-consuming toilets, dress, graces, and coquetry to gain power over men. Amusement and entertainment was the business of their lives. They lacked solid reasoning and good sense, said Chesterfield, but sometimes had wit and an entertaining tattle. Because "little passions" aroused their unquenchable anger and revenge, a man of sense only humored, flattered, trifled, and played with them as he would with a forward child. Although men never trusted women with serious matters, they pretended to do so.[19]

Chesterfield regretted that such women acquired enough power in society to establish a man's character, to help or hinder his advancement by influencing the right people, and to polish his behavior in such a way as to either please or rebuff other men. Although this power over men was repugnant to Chesterfield, he knew that one had to deal with them for social and occupational advancement. Every man, then, was justified in using dissimulation, simulation, flattery, adulation, and assiduity to gain their favor for personal advancement in the world and

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[17] Chesterfield, I, 124, II, 158.

[18] Ibid., I, 124, 134, 192-193, II, 67, 158, 175, 179-180, 190, 207, III, 75-76, 120.

[19] Ibid., I, 192-193.

for purely sensuous gratification.[20]

The eminence of Chesterfield greatly encouraged the invectives against women which his followers perpetuated for many years after his death.

Rousseau recognized the problem inherent in the evil nature of women and the undue influence they had on the lives of men. He wondered how this essentially evil nature could affect the lives of men so much without bringing the world to destruction. He differed from Chesterfield when he told parents to raise their daughters in the path prescribed by nature to restrain their evil proclivities and to encourage what good they possessed. Strict adherence to the laws of nature would neutralize most of the contaminating influences of the female character. By taming their unruly spirits and making them absolutely obedient, they could safely influence men with their beauty and graces.[21] Through these two approaches to the unsavory character of woman, the innatists felt protected from the female.

Woman as Essentially and Innately Good

The fears voiced by Lord Chesterfield and Rousseau over the dangers of the innate evil nature of woman's character influenced the writings of those who tacitly acknowledge the innate goodness of women but continued to dwell on their ability to disrupt society. Others believed their essential goodness overshadowed their less

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Rousseau, pp. 321-444.

desirable traits. Their emphasis on feminine influence in the lives of men and in directing society led to the belief in feminine superiority in the nineteenth century. However, the innate goodness of the feminine character had to be established before the idea of feminine superiority could be developed.

The supporters of this view claimed it was inaccurate to stigmatize all women for the acts of a few bad ones. In fact, they questioned the moral integrity of the men who satired and ridiculed women. What kind of men must they be who had known only bad women? they jeered.[22]

According to this view, the finest materials were used in woman's spiritual creation. God paid special attention to her creation in order to put more of the moral faculties in her heart as a balance for the superior mental faculties in man. Having the conscience of mankind, she could distinguish good from evil, hence had to teach man to accept what was good and to reject what was bad.[23]

Concomitant with the elevation of the moral faculties in woman came the degrading of those in man. Over the years woman became morally civilized, and man became morally primitive. It was this elevation of the feminine moral faculties over the masculine that made

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[22]The sub-theme of Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women is typical of this new approach to the character of woman. See also /John Bennett/, Strictures on Female Education (Norwich: Ebenezer Bushnell, 1792), pp. 1-10, in EAI no. 24094; Alexander, I, x-xvii.

[23]Benjamin Rush, An Oration . . . Containing an Enquiry into the Influence of Physical Causes upon the Moral Faculty (Philadelphia: Charles Cist, 1786), p. 34, in EAI no. 19972; Bennett, p. 109.

feminine superiority so effective.

God implanted several outstanding traits in woman's character to made her the director of civilization and the eradicator of evil. She possessed modesty, chastity, submission and obedience, the desire to please, gentleness, meekness, patience, sensibility, fortitude, humility, tenderness, benevolence, love, self-denial, and devotion; the counterparts of the male virtues of courage, honor, judgment, self-reliance, persistence, determination, aggression, roughness, and impartiality. Her recessive traits were excitability, enthusiasm, temper, vanity, pride, affectation, timidity, unsteadiness, envy, coquetry, anger, revenge, selfishness, scandal, fickleness, dissimulation and simulation.[24]

These dominant virtues promoted proper behavior directly in women and indirectly in men. When the affections had a good tendency, the character was good, contrariwise for a bad tendency. Since erratic influences fathered the various dispositions of mankind, it was imperative to make the affections of woman's heart uniform, stable, and

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[24] John Daniel Gros, Natural Principles of Rectitude (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1795), pp. 318-319, in EAI no. 28775; Rousseau, pp. 328, 332-335, 345-347, 348-349, 354-356; Fordyce, pp. 54-57, 62, 161, 214, 310, 316; Hitchcock, I, 148, II, 16-17, 29, 43, 47; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 180, 132, 184; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 9-10, 38, 86, 88, 102; Burton, pp. 38, 72, 102, 110, 207; Ward (1795), pp.42-43; More, pp. 24-25, 46-52, 59, 62-63; James Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women (1st American ed.; Boston, 1781), pp. 2-3, 20, 23, 25, 26, in EAI no. 19408; Gisborne, pp. 18-19, 84; Hester Mulso Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady (5th ed.; Worcester, 1783), I, 82, II, 133, in EAI no. 17869; John Bennett, Letters to a Young Lady on a Variety of Useful and Interesting Things (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1791), II, 3-4, 6-10, 16-19, 21-29, 47, in EAI no. 23176; The American Museum (3d ed.; Philadelphia: Carey, Stewart, and Company, 1790), pp. 61-64.

persistent.[25]

The chief virtue which promoted societal morality was modesty. It, rather than Chesterfield's vanity and love, formed the foundation of feminine character, claimed The Lady's Pocket Library.[26] In woman it was what sense and courage were in men: their point of honor. With it, everything delighted; in its absence, everything disgusted. As masculine courage and vigor protected society from a foreign enemy, feminine modesty guaranteed the internal safety of society. What more glorious diadem could woman desire? asked the innatists.[27]

Modesty gave birth to gentleness, meekness, and tenderness, not vanity, pride, hatred and revenge. Its dictates made the female shy and reserved, thwarted egotistic displays, and dampened extreme enthusiasm. The modest woman was neither loquacious nor brazen enough to appear often in public.[28]

Her sensibility never defied the voice of modesty. This quickness of sensation and perception necessary to discern the finer feelings of humanity elevated the emotions of sympathy, kindness, meekness, charity, mercy, and compassion in woman. Her positive attributes came forward as modesty prevented the wild excursions of sensibility and the imagination into passionate and illicit love,

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[25]Burton, pp. 84-85.

[26]The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 182.

[27]Boudier de Villemert, p. 86; Kame, p. 196.

[28]Rousseau, pp. 330, 350; Hitchcock, p. 82; Burton, p. 111; Ward (1795), p. 30; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 180, 212.

temper tantrums, and coquetry.[29]

A modest woman had a humble opinion of her own value, abilities, and achievements. She never sought flattery, adulation, assiduity, vainglory, and pride; she preferred the domestic glory of her sex and the esteem of her husband's honor to worldly praise. He took joy and delight in her humility and self-denial.

She was quiet and pleasant in appearance, manners, and conduct, not supercilious and disdainful. Her inner person projected itself outwardly without any distortion. In the place of cunning wit and its train of evils, she displayed honesty, truthfulness, understanding, and sweetness. Patient with her husband's lack of understanding, eager to atone for her wrong-doings, she forgave the misdeeds of others, especially those of her husband. Modesty made her obey her husband and endure even injustice at his hands. It told her to invoke sensibility, delicacy of sentiment, pliability of manners, honest self-denial, compassion, and understanding to guide him to better human relations. Only the most brutal man would resist such a quiet, thoughtful influence.[30]

The mental and physical chastity of modesty gave woman her empire and the homage of men which made her a little lower than the angels. Lewd people with their caustic maxims, false sentiments, and

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[29]More, pp. 46-52, 59; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 38, 88; Chapone, II, 133; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 111, 308, 310.

[30]Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 214, 225, 245; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 157-158; Hitchcock, II, 76-79; Burton, pp. 42-43, lecture xxiii, 256; Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, p. 33; Rousseau, p. 359.

empty gallantry were not among her retainers. She preferred to rule over great and noble souls who had high moral standards. Unlike the bold, shameless, intriguing woman who attracted lovers by coquetry and held them by her favors, and thus won a servile obedience from men in common things but not in weighty matters, the wise and charming woman of virtue, who combined love and esteem, could send men to the end of the world and to death at her bidding.[31] When beauty fled, her purity continued to control the hearts of men as before, and her joys increased many fold.[32]

Her whole kingdom fell, however, when she compromised her virtue. The immediate flight of her other virtues left the unchaste woman forsaken by her friends and relatives, despised and condemned, ridiculed and laughed at. Her headlong fall from the highest honors, wealth, esteem and happiness to the lowest depths of disgrace, poverty, wretchedness, and utter destruction made it better for such a woman to never have been born.[33]

A woman's conscience and public opinion, said the innatist, maintained her reputation.[34] If a modest woman behaved according to custom, tradition, and social decorum, what happened when her

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[31]Hitchcock, II, 295; Rousseau, pp. 355, 356, 359; Kendrick, pp. 28-29; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 176.

[32]Rousseau, pp. 354-355.

[33]The Polite Lady, or a Course of Female Education (1st American ed.; Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1798), p. 185, in EAI no. 34389; Kendrick, pp. 28-29; Boudier de Villemert, p. 87.

[34]The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 179.

conscience clashed with public opinion? A free conscience implied individual existence for woman without reference to man, mental independence, and a flagrant disregard of her separate sphere and duties. The denial of a conscience to woman made her a slave to tradition, custom, and propriety. Her natural pattern of maturation would be perverted by these unless society saw to it that they conformed to the plan of nature. Otherwise her social environment would thwart her innate femininity.

Since neither end of the dilemma satisfied Americans, they straddled the issue. It was not enough for woman to have a clear conscience toward herself, they explained, she also had to have the approbation of public opinion which could be secured by a most prudent and exacting behavior. The woman who courted only public opinion put appearance before virtue and became like the wicked woman who had long ago removed the keystone of her innate character.[35] On the other hand, a woman who followed her conscience and disregarded public opinion lacked the delicacy of soul which established a good reputation.[36]

Nature, some said, impressed a deep and lively sense of reputation in the hearts of woman, and in the minds of men a high esteem for every indication of chastity in women and, whenever reason prevailed over appetite, a strong disapprobation of the contrary. This instinctive desire heavily influenced her to preserve an inner chastity and to conform to the outward signs which convinced others of this inward

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[35] Ibid., p. 124; Rousseau, p. 345.

[36] Webster, p. 407.

purity. When the thoughts were wholesome, the outward behavior was chaste.[37]

In theory woman's innate conscience preceded public opinion and was the judge of it. In practice, the reverse was true, said the innatists. When public opinion was the arbitrator, clashes between the two seldom disturbed the tranquility of the individual or society. In short, custom, tradition, and propriety shaped and controlled the individual conscience of woman more than her conscience judged the world. This arrangement complemented the approved mental subordination of woman.

The innate restraint of woman made it easier for her to submit to public opinion, her parents, and her husband. Submission and obedience when used in this sense meant submission to nature's decrees, not servility to capricious parents or husbands. It was an acquiescence to her constitutional need to obey. When she tried to escape this built-in need for restraint, an indescribable fate awaited her.[38]

However, a proclivity to imitate made it possible for her to give up her opinions instead of pertinaciously continuing a dispute even when she knew she was right. "I do not mean," said Hannah More, that woman "should be robbed of the liberty of private judgment, but that . . ." she should not be encouraged to "contract a contentious

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[37]Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 62; Maria Geertrudia van de Werken Decambon, Letters and Conversations Between Several Young Ladies on Interesting and Improving Subjects, trans. Madame De Cambon (3d ed.; Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1797), p. 315, in EAI no. 32037.

[38]Hitchcock, II, 16-17, 43, 47; Rousseau, pp. 331-332, 340; More, p. 63; Mather, p. 79.

or contradictory turn. . . ."[39] Having a weaker mind, she should not set her opinion above man's, but accept his judgment.

That man was an imperfect creature with vicious and faulty tendencies did not cancel woman's subordination to him, said John Calvin, the great Protestant theologian. Innate obedience gave her the necessary self-denial and patience to endure with a smile the wrongs which her husband might inflict. A forebearing spirit and a mild temper was her best protection while bitterness and obstinacy multiplied her sorrows and the misdeeds of her husband.[40]

Imitation and submission pointed woman to the tone which befitted her sex. She was not made attractive to prey, persuasive to generate bitterness, or obedient to command; or given a sweet, soft voice for harsh words, or delicate features for frowns or anger. Should she fail to learn these lessons of docility early in life, the world would teach them to her at a later date. In light of her innate sexual nature, these restrictions seemed the most indubitable guarantees for her future happiness.[41]

These ideas directly influenced the etiquette of the times. Aaron Burr advised his daughter, Theodosia, to acquire the propriety suitable to her sex; to learn every point of feminine behavior. He

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[39]More, p. 62; Hitchcock, I, 148; Rousseau, p. 333.

[40]John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen (6th American ed., rev. and corr.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1813), II, 660; More, p. 62; Rousseau, pp. 333-334; Mather, p. 79.

[41]Ibid.

informed her that since her physiognomy revealed her inner self, she had to let the feminine traits of cheerfulness, loveliness, gentleness, modesty, and serenity come out in her physique.[42] Alexander Hamilton admonished his daughter, Angelica, to behave with those good manners, politeness, and propriety which secured a good reputation and the esteem of those around her.[43] In the nation's capital George Washington promoted social functions which strictly observed the etiquette derived from the different sexual natures of man and woman. He also told his niece, Harriot, in a letter, to cultivate industry, frugality, good temper, good manners, submission, and to give steady and rigid attention to propriety which developed the proper female character.[44]

Every community needed certain laws to guarantee orderliness and internal security. This made the subordination of woman imperative. The shrew who expected to rule undermined the authority of her husband, destroyed family harmony, and set the community in turmoil. Fallen women were also as great a danger to a nation, for in time they destroyed the public virtues of men. The many evils which overtook a nation through the loss of feminine delicacy and subordination had caused the sage legislators of all republics to make women adopt a sedate behavior, follow propriety, abstain from vice, and shun the very appearance of evil. It

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[42]Matthew L. Davis, Memoirs of Aaron Burr (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1855), I, 379-380, 389, 397.

[43]Alexander Hamilton, The Works of Alexander Hamilton, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), X, 57-58.

[44]George Washington, The Writings of George Washington, ed. W. C. Ford (New York, 1893), XII, 84-86.

was necessary, said the innatists, to correct false feminine tastes which valued trifles and debased things of consequence.[45]

Self-control made woman attentive, industrious, and kept her evil proclivities in check, especially idleness and insubordination. The latter evils, wrote Enos Hitchcock, wasted away a man's fortune in a republic like the United States where these were not secure. Feminine economy and industry would preserve the household, thus be a help to the masculine instinct for the accumulation of goods.[46]

Submission and obedience prepared woman for a lifetime of the strictest and most enduring restraints which society would impose upon her. Experience had shown that a good woman fought a perpetual battle against her own evil nature, but if she were habituated to the yoke from birth, it would not gall her later in life. One innatist advised parents not to give their daughters a moment of freedom but to teach them, for example, to break off their games and return to their duties without a murmur. When woman mastered her caprices and submitted to the will of others, she would have no views or feelings to conflict with other people. If her childish faults which engendered dissipation, inconstancy, and frivolity, were checked in childhood, they would be absent in adulthood. How happy she would be![47]

The compensation for feminine subordination went farther. By

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[45]Burton, pp. 34, 38; Peddle, p. 6; Sketches . . . of the Fair Sex, pp. 124-125.

[46]Hitchcock, II, 34-35; Rousseau, p. 332.

[47]Rousseau, pp. 332, 333; Knox, pp. 20-22.

accepting her characteristic docility, woman was prepared to face the trials, sorrows, and disappointments of life. When she learned to obey, she knew, as a woman, how to reign over the will and affections of man. In this way she helped maintain the equilibrium of the world.[48]

The docile woman achieved self-determination, self-realization, and self-integration by blending her life with that of her husband. Self-determination, which had no meaning for a woman outside of marriage, meant selecting a man whom she wanted to aid and assist in the fortunes and troubles of life.[49] Her instinct to conform and imitate made it easy to submerge her personality in her husband's. Self-realization came through his success. She was to manage the house in such a way as to be no hindrance to him, and when her kind and loving husband sought her advice, she was to give it without expecting any recognition or any share in his achievement. Woman achieved self-integration by habituating herself to all that was lovely, mild, sociable, and sentimental. To know oneself was to be content as a woman and to love all the special traits of her sexual character.[50]

In the final analysis, said the innatists, the character of woman existed to complement the character of man. It was as St. Paul explained:

. . . the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

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[48]Gisborne, p. 169; Burton, pp. 34, 38, 51, 207; More, pp. 62-63; Rousseau, pp. 370, 371; Hitchcock, II, 16-17.

[49]Burton, p. 41.

[50]Webster, p. 411.

> Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.[51]

Conclusion

Eighteenth century Americans knew a sexual nature permeated woman's character from her head to her toes. Whether or not it made her essentially and innately evil or essentially and innately good depended on the author, but they all agreed that it gave her character traits opposite those of man. These differences dictated a way of life in a special sphere away from the rugged one of the male. An innate craving to be submissive, obedient, and docile meant that she gained self-determination, self-realization, and self-integration by blending her life with that of her husband.

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[51] I Cor. 11: 8-9.

CHAPTER V

THE PURPOSE OF WOMAN

From the innate sexual physique, mind, and character of woman, the innatists deduced a complex set of ideas about her purpose, marriage, sphere, social role, religion, and education. These justified her creation, legal status, duties and responsibilities, religious nature, and mental culture. By rationalizing the practical aspects of her life, they prescribed a pattern for her to live by which most women imitated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Special Purpose of Woman

For the innatists the special purpose of woman was clearly revealed in the scriptures.

> And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. . . . And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.[1]

> For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.[2]

> For Adam was first formed, then Eve.[3]

Of all the creatures, man received the greatest honor by being

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[1]Gen. 2: 18, 22-23.

[2]I Cor. 11: 8-9.

[3]I Tim. 2: 13.

made in the image of the Creator and given the power to rule over the earth. However, his loneliness in this vast kingdom disturbed the Lord God, who found an empty space between man and the animals in the great scale of beings. There He created woman from the flesh and bone of man. Had He formed her from the dust, Adam would have considered her a distinct person to whom he had no natural relationship. Instead, he viewed her as a lesser part of himself rather than an alien person. Since no man hated his flesh, but nourished and protected it, subsequent men treated women likewise.[4] By this technique the Lord God guaranteed that husbands would love their wives as their own bodies.[5]

As a gift from God to man, woman was never to forget that she owed her very being to him.[6] As the "after-image" of his glory, she existed, like the other animals, as part of his dominion to serve him. Her existence had no meaning apart from his, for she was not a complete person in and of herself. If this were not true, the Bible Commentators reasoned, why did God make woman an imitative creature and give her a propensity to please the male?[7]

Nevertheless she received the unique privilege of sharing his

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[4]Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes (new ed.; New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1830), I, 45, 46.

[5]Eph. 5: 29; Clarke, I, 45; Thomas Scott, The Holy Bible . . . with Explanatory Notes (new ed.; London: James Nisbet and Co., 1866), I, an explanation of Gen. 2: 18-25 (unpaged).

[6]Clarke, I, 46; William Jenks (ed.), The Comprehensive Commentary on the Holy Bible (Brattleboro: Fessenden and Co., 1835), I, 30.

[7]Ibid.

thoughts, his desires, his passions, his appetites, and his very being which no other part of creation could do. By being created so close to him, she could follow him, do his reasonable biddings, blend her interests inseparably with his, find her life by losing it in his, and be the greatest grace, honor, and ornament to him.[8] If she failed in taking care of his pleasures, his comfort, his procreation, and his perfection, she would reap the unhappy results which came from violating the law of her very being. This feminine prototype reached her perfection when she worked for the happiness of man as he sought the glory of God.

The purpose of woman was further clarified after the Fall. Being more at fault in this great event, she received the harsher punishment. Her physical disorders were to be greatly multiplied, especially during conception, pregnancy, and parturition, and could not be avoided, for God gave her desires or appetities which drew her "unto her husband."[9]

The second pronouncement--"and he shall rule over thee"--placed Adam in authority. If woman had been equal in abilities, physique, mind, and rights before the Fall, said several Bible Commentators, she certainly lost this supposed equality as a result of her

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[8]Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Haverhill, 1794), p. 71, in EAI no. 29829; Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London, 1798), p. 165, in EAI no. 33801.

[9]Clarke, I, 53; Scott, I, an explanation of Gen. 3: 16; Jenks, I, 37.

sin.[10] To be in subjection to the will of her husband was part of her punishment. Had there been no sin, the husband would have ruled with wisdom and love; the wife would have obeyed with humility and meekness. Original sin converted submission from a duty into a punishment and made his authority often an unreasonable and unfeeling despotism. Although the yoke might be heavy and harsh at times, woman had to comply meekly. And since God did not want a struggle between the sexes, He made feminine submission a divine law. It seemed Matthew Henry unwittingly destroyed the effectiveness of his commentary on this subject by telling women who despised, disobeyed, and domineered over their husbands that they violated a divine law and thwarted a divine punishment. Some women must have wondered about a "divine punishment" that could be "thwarted" with impunity.[11]

The appropriate aim of every woman was to be the properly qualified auxiliary or help mate to her husband. Mid-eighteenth century Americans took this to mean a sort of better servant who entertained his fancy and gratified his palate and his passions. Woman, wrote Benjamin Franklin in 1746, was not suited for the "delicate pleasures of a rational esteem and the Godlike Joys of . . .

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[10] Clarke, I, 53; Jenks, I, 37; Philip Doddridge, The Family Expositor, or a Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament (11th ed.; London: F. C. and J. Rivington and others, 1821), V, 166; Scott, I, an explanation of Gen. 3: 16.

[11] Jenks, I, 37; Scott, I, an explanation of Gen. 3: 16; Clarke, I, 53; John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen (6th American ed., rev. and corr.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1813), II, 660.

Friendship."[12]

By the end of the century, some authors considered woman more of an assistant who administered tender endearments to man and a reasonable companion who assisted him in the toils of life. If God made Adam a helper and assistant before the Fall, how much more did he need one after the transgression![13] A few innatists suggested that woman was worthy to be the friend of man and his partner in cares and pleasures. Others accepted her as the one who supplied the essential assistance which freed man for the rougher pursuits and prolonged studies which were necessary to conquor and subdue nature. What man could build the mighty ships and roads, dig the mines, construct the buildings, plow the fields, and develop financial structures if he had to tend the young baby, cook the meals, clean the house, make clothes, and do other domestic duties? Woman's neglect of her domestic duties threw civilization into confusion and disorder.[14] Thus woman advanced from a supernumerary servant to the mistress of the household, the mother of the next generation, and a softer companion who improved man's pleasures and soothed his pains.

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[12]Benjamin Franklin, Reflections on Courtship and Marriage (Philadelphia, 1746), p. 2, in EAI no. 5772. However, Franklin blamed much of the inability of woman to enjoy manly friendship upon a bad education.

[13]Ward (1794), pp. 60-61; Franklin, p. 2.

[14]/Robert Dodsley/, The Oeconomy of Human Life (6th ed.; Philadelphia: Reprinted and sold by B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1751), pp. 45-46, 53-54, in EAI no. 6660; James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (new ed.; Philadelphia, 1787), pp. 123-124, in EAI no. 20362; John Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners (3d ed.; Dublin, 1794), p. 62, in EAI no. 26722.

Concomitantly, the institutionalization of the function of sex made woman the means to satisfy the strong sex drive of the male, thereby freeing him from the corrosive effects of inconstancy. He could then concentrate on the pursuits which advanced civilization.[15] She made it possible for him to fulfill the commandment to multiply and be fruitful by being the only receptacle into which he could cast the "miniature embryo" and expect it to grow.

Feminine Dependence

The innatists used a variety of evidence to prove that the natural dependence of woman was the means ordained for her to fulfill her purpose in life.

The scriptures forbid the lesser to exceed the greater--as man should not proclaim himself above God so woman should not seek the glory of man, but should try to glorify him. Nature never intended the auxiliary to outshine the principle, or the apprentice to shame the master, or the woman to overshadow the man. The afterglow of a husband's success belonged to the wife; this was her personal glory. A wife, said the apostles, was secondary to her husband in every way and should not be independent of him. Her salvation rested on how well she kept the divine law of dependence.[16]

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[15] Ward (1794), pp. 70, 71.

[16] /William Kendrick/, The Whole Duty of Woman (Philadelphia: Crukshank, 1788), p. 53, in EAI no. 21184; Ward (1794), pp. 63-66; Noah Webster, A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), p. 411, in EAI no. 23053; John Knox, The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regimen of Women (Philadelphia: Andrew

From time immemorial custom and tradition affirmed the efficacy of feminine subordination as the sure road to happiness, love, and protection from the numberless dangers of life. Experience of the past proved the soundness of the oath "to love, honor and obey" which woman took at marriage.

Politically, the early habituation of women guaranteed the serenity of the home, ordered society, promoted public safety, and left the stronger, men, free to transact their common interests. Nature made her acquiescence in this arrangement the rule rather than the exception by arranging the circumstances of life to favor the superior strength of man.[17] Also her natural fearfulness led her to consciously seek his protection.[18] The court of last resort for a woman who failed in this quest was to enthusiastically embrace God.

The political and physiological disabilities of woman made it impossible for her to procure the comforts and necessities of life without the aid of man, said the innatists. The wisdom of God formed man for the arduous business of providing for his household but gave her a moral claim to a share of his worldly goods. Economically

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Stewart, 1766), pp. 20-22, in EAI no. 10249; Jenks, I, 30. The theological argument rested upon several scriptures. Examples of how they were used are found in Fordyce, p. 32, Ward (1794), pp. 50, 55, 59, and 63, and Gisborne, pp. 6 and 186. The most popular scriptures were Eph. 5: 22, 24, 25, 33; Col. 3: 18, 19; I Cor. 14: 34, 35; I Tim. 2: 15; Titus, 2: 5; and I Pet. 3: 1, 7.

[17]Enos Hitchcock, Memoirs of the Bloomsgrove Family (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), I, 25, II, 16-17, in EAI no. 22570; Webster, p. 411; The Lady's Pocket Library (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1792), p. 155, in EAI no. 24452.

[18]Fordyce, p. 225.

dependent, she was domestic in every sense of the word.[19]

Psychologically, the stronger mental powers of the male overshadowed the moral ones of woman in all aspects of life except the domestic, where the wife knew more about feeding children, washing clothes, and cooking food. By this morsel, the innatists tried to soften the pain of mental inferiority.[20]

In character, she was also dependent. Her desire to please and to imitate, her timid temper, susceptible heart, feeble habits, and complacent manners looked to the original, self-asserting, and bold male for leadership. All the means to gain the esteem of man--the love of dress, personal ornamentation, coquetry, maintenance of chastity and reputation--sprang from this modesty.[21]

The institutions of society reflected the dependence of woman. The marriage ceremony which united two persons and two properties automatically conferred the class, social position, and rank of the husband on the woman he married. Through the husband, she and the family took their place in society. When the man married a woman of lower rank, he did not lower himself, but raised her in society. On the other hand, if he married a woman whose rank was above his, he

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[19]James Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women (1st American ed.; Boston, 1781), p. 20, in EAI no. 19408; Hitchcock, I, 25, II, 15; Franklin, p. 31.

[20]Webster, pp. 411-412.

[21]Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, pp. 20-21; Hitchcock, II, 47, 48.

lowered hers and did not raise his.[22]

Since the law of nature and society bade the woman obey the man, it was expedient for him to marry a wife either of the same rank or from those lower in society. In this way natural and civil law supported the union and all would go well. Should he marry a woman of a higher rank, the opposite happened. He would have to choose between diminished masculine right or imperfect gratitude, for such a wife would lay claim to authority and tyrannize her lawful head. In the end, he would be a ridiculous and miserable creature.[23]

The dependence of woman included a natural gift for managing men, however. She was to reign in the home, said Rousseau, as the minister reigned in the state, by contriving to be ordered to do what she wanted to do; caresses expressed her commands, tears her threats. In these homes the wife exercised the most power, hence they were the best managed. But misery, scandal, and dishonor were invited in those where the wife despised the advice of her head and inverted the proper order of things by usurping the right to command. Thus nature made a vast difference between claiming the right to command and managing the holder of power.[24]

Woman's legal dependence was also derived from English common law, which dominated America. By making the husband-wife one person,

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[22]Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1911), p. 362.

[23]Ibid., p. 370.

[24]Ibid., pp. 362-371.

it suspended her very being and legal existence during marriage. What contact she had with the law came via her husband.[25] He could not grant anything to his wife or enter into a contract with her, for such action supposed she was a separate person with legal responsibility. To grant or covenant with one's wife was to give to himself what was already his. If a husband bequeathed anything to his wife, it could not take effect until after his death. The marriage coverture was then terminated and the wife received a minimal legal personality.

Legally the husband had to provide the necessities of life for his wife, but beyond these he was not liable. He was responsible for her debts at marriage since he adopted her and her circumstances together. However, she ceased to have these obligations after the wedding.

In general, a wife could not bring action or demand redress for an injury to her person or property without her husband's consent. Neither he nor she could witness for or against the other because their testimony could not be indifferent, but principally because the woman had no legal existence. She could only be sued in the name of her husband. However, under some circumstances, she could be indicted and punished separately in criminal law.

The law allowed the husband to give his wife moderate correction since he had to answer for her misbehavior. The law thought it only just to allow him to restrain her within reasonable limits, violence

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[25]William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books (reprinted from the British copy; Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1771), p. 442, in EAI no. 11996.

usually being prohibited. Although the practice received little adherence in the upper classes, wrote William Blackstone, the lower classes still claimed and exerted the ancient common law privilege. In the cases of children and property, the former belonged first to the father, then to the mother. In general, whatever property belonged to the wife before marriage was absolutely vested in the husband at the ceremony. Woman's legal dependence during marriage was intended to give her protection, sustenance, and to prevent either sex from abusing her natural desire to please.[26]

However, the law made some exceptions to the absolute dependence required of a wife. In breaches of the law, she was excused from prosecution and punishment if her husband had compelled her to break the law. He received the punishment in her place. A few innatists suspended her dependence if he violated divine law or tried to force her to do likewise.[27]

Marriage as the Main Objective for Woman

Marriage which institutionalized feminine dependence was viewed as the sole objective in life for woman. In it she could achieve her purpose and obtain the aid of a masculine physique, mind and character

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[26] Ibid., pp. 433-436, 442-446, 461; William Alexander, The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time (Philadelphia: J. H. Dobelbower, 1796), II, 315ff, in EAI no. 29964; Sketches of the History, Genius, Disposition, Accomplishments, Employments, Customs and Importance of the Fair Sex (Philadelphia: Samuel Sansom, 1796?), pp. 161-166, in EAI no. 31688.

[27] Blackstone, p. 444; Franklin, pp. 30-32; Gisborne, pp. 168-170. Biblical scriptures quoted in connection with limitations on the power of the husband were Col. 3: 19, I Pet. 3: 7 and Eph. 5: 25.

which completed her being.[28] It also rested on the different natures of the sexes and the fact that God had given woman to man as an assistant. For these reasons, she was always given to him in the ceremony. However her promise to love, honor, and obey was binding only if she had willingly entered the contract with her husband. This voluntary action not only institutionalized her dependence but guaranteed the purity of her husband's motives towards her.[29]

According to the law of nature, woman sought the side of man, and he wanted to recover his rib. The strength of this urge necessitated a means to regulate it, and marriage was the sovereign remedy for incontinence.[30] The natural attraction of the sexes required some legal arrangement since man could do without the woman easier than she could do without him.[31] He needed marriage laws to restrain his wife should he go to war or undertake a long journey; they would curb her evil tendencies in his absence.

In spite of the natural laws of love a number of ill effects accompanied the connubial state. Material and class security plagued couples; love reached a high point, then cooled, leaving many marriages miserable in a few years. Beauty, often the sole reason for marriage,

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[28]Ward (1794), p. 66.

[29]Blackstone, p. 433; Franklin, p. 30; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 100; Francis Hutcheson, A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy (trans. from the Latin, 2d ed.; Glasgow: Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1753), pp. 243-253.

[30]Calvin, I, 364; Ward (1794), p. 70.

[31]Rousseau, p. 322.

eventually faded while accomplishments lost their power and freshness. When they were gone, the wife lost her husband to a younger woman of beauty and accomplishment. The complex society of modern times diversified personalities, and any marriage consummated upon these artificial character traits soon lost its primeval bliss. Outward veneer dictated by decorum wore thin in domestic living, and the real characters of husband and wife took over.

What then, constituted the basis for lasting felicity in marriage? asked the innatists. What held a marriage together as youthful urges and desires mellowed with middle age and finally died? What made a nuptial knot secure during the storms of life?

The innatists hoped to find the best matrimonial mooring by following the good effects and the bad consequences of this or that marriage to their sources. They isolated several divergent bases, each with its own set of consequences: (1) material and class suitability, (2) romantic suitability, (3) natural suitability, and (4) friendship.

Suitability according to fortune and social class rested almost exclusively on the need to secure wealth and family name. Status could be lost by a wrong marriage and material well-being through dissipation. The failure of either party to bring substantial properties to the marriage eventually lowered the couple in the social scale. A romantic marriage tended to disgrace the family and destroy its continuity. After the passions subsided, what then? Would an unhappy wife dissipate the family fortune to spite her husband? Or would a miserable husband squander it on a mistress?

Obviously, the parents were the best qualified to make marriage arrangements, wrote the supporters of this view. After all, who had a better knowledge of society and family fortunes? Love would grow in the hearts of the husband and wife who were held together by money, social rank, and children. According to material and class suitability, the union of properties and social positions had to precede the joining of two people if the continuity of the ruling class were to be guaranteed.[32]

The supporters of romantic suitability proclaimed that marriages were made in heaven. There two souls were made for each other, then sent to earth where each instinctively sought his complementary spirit. The inevitable result was marriage and happiness forever after. Few innatists supported this view.

Natural suitability exalted the union founded on the natural agreement of tastes, feelings, minds, and dispositions instead of the artificial traits engendered by sophistication. Accordingly, a chaste and honorable love brought two people together. If legal restrictions or monetary and social considerations fettered their natural love by demanding an outward show of order, immorality resulted. The personal relationship made a happy marriage, not these other considerations. Natural suitability, then, instead of suitability of wealth or social

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[32] Ibid. George Washington, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washinton, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), XXXIV, 92-93; for a critical view of this basis for marriage see, Thomas Paine, "Reflections on Unhappy Marriages," The Life and Works of Thomas Paine, ed. William M. Van der Weyde (New Rochelle, New York: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), II, 74-78.

status or fleeting romantic passions made for happiness and high morals for all citizens.[33]

However, those who believed themselves to be naturally attracted were advised to consult their parents to insure that reason and calm emotions, instead of the whim of the moment, had chosen correctly. Headstrong motives derived from ill-conducted passion generally made unhappy marriages, said the innatists. When the parents and the young lovers could not reach a common insight, the proponents of natural suitability suggested two alternatives: first, the young lovers should defer their marriage until they were of legal age, and second, the parents should refrain as much as possible from interfering with the desires of Providence clearly evident in the situation.

However, if young couples gave serious thought to the meaning of marriage, they would not enter into it lightly. The woman selected a master for life, and he selected a help mate. She selected a lover and husband while he selected a lover and mother for his children. She could not be too careful in discerning the worthy man who respected woman from the coxcomb (playboy) who desired to degrade womanhood. Marriage also meant adapting her way of life and thinking to his and studying every way of pleasing him.[34] By this means, the supporters of natural suitability hoped to avoid the evil consequences of infatuation

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[33] Rousseau, p. 362.

[34] Ibid., pp. 363, 366-367; /Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert/, The Ladies Friend (New Haven: Abel Morse, 1789), p. 102, in EAI no. 21708.

and its chimerical happiness.[35]

In order to distinguish natural from artificial suitability, one had to realize that what was suitable in a state of savagery differed greatly from that in the state of civilization. In the former any woman suited any man since both were in a primitive and undifferentiated society. There was nothing complicated about the duties of the sexes or the conception of masculinity and femininity.[36]

But in the civilized state, the social institutions, especially education, religion, and social stratification, gave each person a distinct personality by adding manners, propriety, and accomplishments peculiar to this or that rank in society. The diversification of personalities and social distinctions made it extremely difficult to find a corresponding person of the opposite sex. Many of the evils of modern marriage arose from young people mistaking artificial for natural suitability.[37] The more people were differentiated socially, economically, religiously, politically, and intellectually, the greater the emphasis upon matching the trained artificialities added to the natural dispositions of each person. In many cases, social accomplishment, occupation, education, church affiliation, and family status smothered the original preferences and made marriage a cold legal union of property and social positions rather than a spiritual union of two people.

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[35]Rousseau, p. 364; Franklin, p. 6; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 70-73.

[36]Sketches . . . of the Fair Sex, p. 32; Alexander, I, 37.

[37]Rousseau, p. 369.

Personal prejudices had to be stifled, human institutions forgotten, and nature consulted in order to rediscover natural suitability. Then it would be clear that those who were alike in only one set of circumstances should not be joined together, for if fame and fortune should change they would no longer suit each other. But those who were compatible regardless of situation, city, or rank in which they might be placed were naturally suited to each other. Such a natural agreement of taste, temper, feeling, and disposition existed so strongly in each person, said the innatist, that the wise parent, though of the nobility, would not hesitate for a moment to marry his offspring to the person who was naturally adapted to his son or daughter even if he or she came from a bad home or the lower levels of society.[38]

Conventional considerations were of some value, but the husband and wife united according to natural suitability enjoyed more real happiness in the midst of any misfortune which might befall them, than those who possessed all the riches of the world but were poisoned by divided hearts. Natural love which sprang from permanent esteem, unwavering virtues, and from a fitness of character carried the charm and delights of early love into old age.[39]

Rousseau explained how love cooled or turned to hatred in the marriage where the husband and wife were not naturally suited for each other. At marriage, an almost imperceptible difference separated the sexes; the husband, being less constant than the wife, soon grew weary

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p. 439.

of success in love. As his passions cooled, her anxiety and jealousy drove her to pay him the attentions which he had used to gain her favors; it was her turn to practice humility. But she rarely succeeded in stoking his boiler with affection and kind deeds.[40]

When people made a duty of the tenderest caresses and a right of the sweetest pledges of love, a degree of animosity entered their marriage. The question of marital rights violated mutual desire, the basis for love-making. Human law might restrict mutual desire, but it could not give marital rights pre-eminence.

Also mastery, not possession, by one partner made him or her grow tired of the other. In the case of the husband, the difficulties in mastering a mistress caused his affection for her to last longer than for his wife. The same was true for the wife with a lover. Love, concluded Rousseau, based on duty and favors gained as rights turned to bitterness.

Although the husband and wife owed each other fidelity, neither had to complaisantly give himself to the other except by his own will and consent. The husband who played the lover and the wife who played the mistress kept love from dying, hence never raised the question of marital right.[41] The wife who kept her husband at a distance kindled his curiosity and masculinity for a siege of the seemingly impregnable "fortress," and her refusals and the quickness of her wit in avoiding the traps of the hunter brought the most exquisite emotions into action

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[40] Ibid., p. 440.

[41] Ibid., p. 441.

which the imagination and anticipation could arouse. At last, success! His skill and constant application prevailed against this mighty fortress and his pride which thrilled at the thought of being the only man who could overcome her constant, natural modesty, was satiated. Every love-making episode would seem like two virgins approaching the nuptial bed of silver-laced oaks.[42]

The combination wife-mother-harlot-mistress would long rule by love if she made her favors scarce and precious, but her sternness had to be the result of modesty not caprice or love of tyranny if she hoped to gain the same power over his heart that he had over her mind. He had to honor her chastity without doubting her love or complaining of her coldness.[43]

These ideas probably caused virtue to be associated with infrequent sexual relations; the opposite would be something less than honorable for the wife. Combined with the belief in man's virile physique and woman's delicate nervous constitution, this concept undoubtedly led to the acceptance of the "double standard." By rationing their favors, married women redefined virtue as the maintenance of a distinct identity from the prostitute who frequently engaged in passionate love-making. Such unfortunate women were necessary, said American society, to protect womanhood from the savage masculine passion.

The wife who controlled her husband through her pleasures would

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[42] Ibid., pp. 442-443.

[43] Ibid., p. 442.

win his esteem, claimed Rousseau. Confident that her virtue and modesty were not screens for vicious schemes, he would consult her in all his affairs and do nothing without her consent. Should his wisdom stray, she could recall him with coquetry to aid virtue, with love to assist reason, and with loveliness to bolster modesty. However, should her best efforts fail, she was to take courage and renew her efforts.[44]

At length when passion naturally faded away, a gentle habit and the charm of confidence would take its place; children would be the bond as strong as love. When she ceased to be his mistress, she would be his friend, his wife, and the mother of his children and he, her companion and friend. Then, the first reticence would blossom into the fullest intimacy, and there would be no more separate beds, refusals or caprices. Their lives would become intertwined like the roses on a trellis. They would have fewer problems as the passionate phase mellowed in middle life and, finally, disappeared in the golden twilight years.

Another group of writers who played down material and social considerations, romantic feelings, and a "mystical" natural suitability believed friendship formed the best basis for marriage.

All true friendships, they said, emerged from calm, rational deliberations, and when two such persons became emotionally involved, they agreed to be joined in marriage for life. The close alliance between love and mutual admiration was no frivolous amusement resulting from idleness or vanity but possessed the whole person's mind, heart, imagination, judgment, reason, and memory. It gave purpose and direction

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[44] Ibid., p. 443.

to life.[45] To marry without a real union of minds or sympathy of affections contradicted reason, virtue, and morality.

Consequently, marriage was the highest state of friendship and the pre-requisites for it were all important in a husband and wife. All the jealousies, caprices, and contradictions which destroyed a friendship, hence a marriage, were to be avoided.[46] True friends stood steadfast during adverse circumstances, for no temptation, however great, could lead them to violate this sacred bond. The wife would cheerfully submit to the unpredictable conditions of life and the fortunes of her husband; his affection would remain unchanged year after year.[47] The transient and accidental feelings or passions eventually subsided into either friendship or hatred, said Benjamin Franklin.

Conventional, natural, and romantic suitability often used the word "love" when they meant friendship, explained the friendship school. They had to end in either companionship or misery, hence the grandest affair of a woman's life was to gain and preserve the friendship of a husband.[48]

Conclusion

The sexual nature of woman's physique, mind, and character

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[45] Boudier de Villemert, pp. 66, 67; Hester Mulso Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady (5th ed.; Worcester, 1783), II, 113, in EAI no. 17869.

[46] Burton, p. 39; John Witherspoon, Lectures on Moral Philosophy, ed. Varnum Lansing Collins (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1912), p. 45.

[47] Hitchcock, I, 284-285.

[48] Franklin, pp. vii, 8, 23, 27; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 229.

pointed to a special purpose for her. Like the brute creation, she existed as part of man's dominion with the express purpose to serve him, to make him happy, and to be his help mate; she was to satisfy his sexual desires, to enable him to multiply and replentish the earth, to educate his children, and to free him from domestic chores in order to subdue nature.

Nature made her dependence the way to fulfill her purposes, said the innatists, and a variety of evidence proved it. Theologically, she fulfilled her destiny by obeying man as he looked to God for direction; politically, an ordered home produced an ordered society and public safety; physiologically, he protected her; economically, she could not procure the comforts and necessities of life without his aid; psychologically, her weaker mind could not judge properly; characteristically, she loved to please and imitate the ways of her husband; historically, custom and tradition proved the efficacy of feminine dependence; legally, she had no legal existence; and institutionally, her social class and rank depended entirely on that of her husband.

The grand aim of woman was to serve man which she could best do through marriage. The innatists generally agreed that marriages based on natural suitability and friendship endured the longest and were the happiest. However minority groups favored romantic suitability or material and class considerations. In spite of these differences, they agreed that marriage properly institutionalized feminine dependence and directed woman's energies for the betterment of society.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPHERE OF WOMAN

The innatists claimed that a special place in the great scale of being was reserved exclusively for woman and that her unique nature equipped her for this empire. Predestined to the feminine role in life, she was unsuited for the realm of the male.[1]

She needed a superior degree of caution, retirement, and circumspection which could be found in the home. God had made man strong of limb and given him a robust constitution for agriculture, war, commerce, politics, industry, legislation, and jurisprudence, in short, for all public activities. Like the stronger and more substantial wares, he

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[1]Hannah More, Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies (Philadelphia, 1786), pp. 1-2, in EAI no. 19810; James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (new ed.; Philadelphia, 1787), pp. 161, 167-168, in EAI no. 20362; /William Kendrick/, The Whole Duty of Woman (Philadelphia: Crukshank, 1788), p. 16, in EAI no. 21184; Hester Mulso Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady (5th ed.; Worcester, 1783), II, 192, in EAI no. 17869; Enos Hitchcock, Memoirs of the Bloomsgrove Family (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), II, 29, 293, in EAI no. 22570; Noah Webster, A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), pp. 30, 412, in EAI no. 23053; The Lady's Pocket Library (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1792), pp. 100, 137, 142, 212, in EAI no. 24452; /Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert/, The Ladies Friend (New Haven: Abel-Morse, 1789), p. 84, in EAI no. 21708; John Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners (3d ed.; Dublin, 1794), pp. 42, 47, 48, 55, 62, in EAI no. 26722; Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Haverhill, 1794), pp. 63, 65, in EAI no. 29829; Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London, 1798), pp. 15, 84, 162, 199, 213, 217, in EAI no. 33801; Benjamin Franklin, Reflections on Courtship and Marriage (Philadelphia, 1746), p. 46, in EAI no. 5772.

derived no injury and lost no polish by always being engaged in the incessant activities of science, philosophy, administration, and the learned professions. It was his proper sphere where he breathed his natural air and exerted his noblest powers.[2] The home, on the other hand, kept the weaker sex from the damaging effects of the hustle, noise, and turmoil of the masculine world. Thus, the same principle which excluded woman from law, politics, mathematics, and physics kept man from the domestic sphere.

She also had a particular bias for the stove, needle, scrub-board, mop, and nursery rather than for the spear, plow, and hammer. Her virtues, which gave the domestic sphere its tone and character, were of a peaceful nature, not those that courted worldly fame.[3]

In this soft, warm retreat, she moved with as much honor and importance as he did upon the land or sea. She gained fame by super-intending domestic concerns, exercising benevolence, comforting the sick, cheering the aged, diffusing bliss in the affectionate intercourse of life. In this kingdom (the home) and government (the

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[2]The American Spectator, or Matrimonial Preceptor (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1797), p. 217, in EAI no. 31725; /John Bennett/, Strictures on Female Education (Norwich: Ebenezer Bushnell, 1792), pp. 105-108, in EAI no. 24092; Henry Home, Lord Kame, Six Sketches on the History of Man (Philadelphia: Bell and Aitken, 1776), p. 195, in EAI no. 14801.

[3]More, p. 2; Fordyce, pp. 101, 161, 212, 225; Joel Foster, The Duties of a Conjugal State (Stonington-Port: Printed by Samuel Trumbull, 1800), p. 10, in EAI no. 37437; Gisborne, p. 14; Hitchcock, II, 55; Enos Hitchcock, A Discourse on Education (Providence: Wheeler, 1785), p. 15, in EAI no. 19040; The American Spectator, p. 217; Thomas Jefferson, The Works of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), XII, 93.

family) her dignity consisted of always acting agreeable to her prescribed character and in preserving her influence in the way ordained by nature.[4] When she neglected her duties and left her assigned place in society, she offended man by intruding in his business. The same was true of a man who left his place and received the appellation of "betty." Each sex felt pride in being qualified for its station in life and resented the encroachment of the other on his or her rights and privileges.[5]

The strong maternal instinct of woman also contributed substantially to the division of labor between the sexes. During pregnancy, she required special care and freedom from hard work; after parturition, she needed a quiet, easy life to nurse and rear the children. As the molder of character, she could plan a course of training for the children without fear of sudden changes or distractions as in the world of men. What greater compensation could a woman want for being barred from masculine occupations, asked Enos Hitchcock, than to shape the tone and course of civilization by molding the character of the next generation.[6]

Americans also found the holy scriptures upheld the separate spheres of the sexes. St. Paul told women "to be discreet, chaste,

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[4]Kendrick, p. 16; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 180-181; Webster, p. 30; Burton, pp. 48-49; Gisborne, pp. 213, 217.

[5]Webster, p. 410.

[6]Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., II, 23, I, 66; Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1911), pp. 324, 238; Burton, pp. 47-50.

keepers of home" and "obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."[7] Americans took this advice literally and viewed feminine behavior, other than domestic, as a breach of the word of God, a sin peculiarly female. No learning, mental endowment, or pleas of literary pursuits could exempt her from the divine duty of guiding the home. The management of the table, the kitchen, and female servants were her divinely sanctioned duties, and whatever she might attain in other kinds of knowledge, she acted out of character, making herself the object of ridicule instead of approbation. Eighteenth century America expected every woman to imitate the ideal housekeeper found in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs.[8]

History confirmed the domesticity of woman in all ages and nations. Custom and tradition, the actualizing of natural law, made the care of the household her indispensable employment. Having more force than law, the ancient mores ostracized any man who entered feminine occupations and disgraced any woman who bolted her realm. Indeed, the prudent and candid never broke down the natural distinctions which allowed each sex to acquire excellence both here and in the hereafter.[9]

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[7]Titus 2: 5; I Tim. 5: 14. See Gisborne, p. 199; Burton, p. 42; and Fordyce, pp. 126-133 for examples of the use of these scriptures to support and explain the sphere of woman.

[8]Burton, p. 62; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 137; Chapone, II, 129; Fordyce, p. 161; Proverbs, chapter 31.

[9]More, pp. 1-2; Fordyce, p. 125; Gisborne, p. 199; Webster, p. 140.

The Dichotomy of the Sphere of Woman

The eighteenth century divided woman's sphere into her domestic and social responsibilities. The latter referred to her social function at formal and informal gatherings while the former referred to those activities within the home or which affected its operation. The domestic responsibilities of a woman always took precedence over her social ones.

The Domestic Role of Woman

In the domestic role, woman was expected to be competent in domestic skills, elegant accomplishments, and feminine intellect.[10] Domestic attainments, the only proper temporal business assigned to woman by providence, required a perfect knowledge of the arts of cooking, sewing, clothes-making, and cleaning. Household management included midwifery, handling of servants, preserving of food, rearing of children, economy, interior decoration and etiquette.[11] The woman trained in economy could help forestall the possibility of poverty by the frugal use of her husband's income. Yet his superior reason and judgment controlled the purse strings in order to prevent her from inadvertantly squandering the family fortune on trivials. Her economy consisted mainly of a niggardly use of all household items, for she could throw more out the window with a teaspoon than he could throw in

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[10] Fordyce, p. 125.

[11] The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 137, 141, 142; Burton, lectures vi and vii; Amelia Simmons, American Cookery (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1796), p. 3, in EAI no. 31193.

the door with a shovel.[12]

Domestic responsibilities included the management of servants. The wife, in a kind and impersonal manner, was to assign female servants specific tasks and oversee them regularly. At no time was she to trust the management of her household to a female servant who might subtly steal the love of her husband and children, thus disgrace her socially.[13]

Elegant accomplishments gave polish to a wife and her household. Needle-work, which was well adapted to her constitution and sedentary life, encouraged frugality, dress-making, and ornamentation. By filling her vacant hours, it discouraged scandal, gossip, idle visiting, and indolent pleasure. It could also furnish her with a living should this become necessary. Embroidery stimulated her imagination and corrected her sense of beauty; drawing refined her taste, improved her dress designs, and focused her attention on details. Music gave the wife a most polite, agreeable talent. Dancing improved her poise, strengthened her body, rendered her gait easy and made her deportment graceful, while excellence in manners made her pleasing. A knowledge of cards and games completed her elegant accomplishments.

Other values came from these skills. Needle-work, embroidery, drawing, and music improved the female mind by feeding it details, its

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[12]Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., II, 34-35; Burton, pp. 44, 57; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 100; Jefferson, XII, 93; George Washington, The Writings of George Washington, ed. W. C. Ford (New York, 1893), XII, 84-86.

[13]Gisborne, p. 100; Burton, pp. 59-60; Chapone, II, 165-172; and Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., I, 160-169 are examples of how females were viewed by the ideology about woman in the eighteenth century.

special food. These attracted man to her society where she could smooth his asperities and fulfill her innate desire to please. The skillful use of conversation and personal charm would keep her husband home in the evenings, brighten the family circle, and add joy to the matrimonial state. When he grew tired of the ambition, duplicity, intrigues, and treachery of the male sex, the softness, tenderness, unassumingness, and simplicity of his wife would draw him to the warmth and confidence of the domestic circle.[14]

The intellectual accomplishments which suited woman's mental make-up prepared her to educate children, satisfy her curiosity, make the home attractive, enliven her husband's leisure hours, and add sparkle to her conversation. However, the woman never gained mental cultivation who carried her intellectual endeavors to the point she neglected the management of her home, damaged her delicate health, harmed her mind, masculinized her character, and trespassed the bounds of her sphere.

The significance of the domestic sphere was evident in several other ways. The division of labor between the sexes lessened the trials and burdens of life. With the help of his kind and affectionate helpmate who administered consolation during distress, man was better able to face the harsh realities of this world. Her superior sensibility was particularly adapted to this kind of aid.[15]

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[14]Fordyce, pp. 139-153; Burton, pp. 63-71; Rousseau, pp. 337-339, 351; More, pp. 54-62; Page Smith, John Adams (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962), II, 849; Jefferson, XII, 92.

[15]Burton, pp. 40, 57.

Accordingly, her sphere remained an auxiliary to the role of man in the emerging industrial society. Her economic responsibility and dependence remained what it had been through the ages, and eighteenth century mores pronounced these just. Hence most occupations remained unsuited for her sex and were not very lucrative. Politics and law belonged strictly to the man because she lacked the necessary mental strength or physical stamina for them.[16] Her love and tenderness would falter in carrying out political maneuvers and in making laws and judicial decisions. The bold gestures, daring countenance, loud voice, and ferocity of man suited him for these clashes and firm decisions. Her sweet, gentle character would always be torn between imitating what was right and what those around her were doing.[17] The learned professions with their deep philosophical truths escaped her comprehension; besides her narrow and limited sphere did not require such knowledge. But this was the way nature had organized human existence, claimed the innatists, and woman should be content with it.[18]

However, each sex had "natural rights" when it performed the duties of its own sphere. The wife could lay claim to a good husband, children and economic support; the husband to a faithful wife, a tranquil home, and domestic economy. A woman who left her sphere

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[16]Charles Francis Adams, The Works of John Adams (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1851, 1854), VI, 460-461, IX, 375-378; Jefferson, XII, 16, X, 339; Thomas Jefferson, Correspondence (Boston: Printed from the originals in the collection of William K. Bixby, 1916), p. 35.

[17]Fordyce, p. 305.

[18]The Polite Lady, or a Course of Female Education (1st American ed.; Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1798), p. 140, in EAI no. 34389.

voided her natural rights; the same was true for man.

The innatists also believed the separate province of woman made her morally stronger than man. Private life required a higher form of heroism than military or political exploits, for it was difficult to practice virtue without help from glory to stimulate and revitalize a person. Woman needed a great deal more courage to live by the feminine virtues, which showed themselves only in the seclusion of the home and disdained ostentation. To live unobserved at home and to be virtuous only in one's own eyes was an ordeal unmatched by vulgar displays on the battlefield or in the political arena. To always be kind to servants, pleasing and amiable to all people, compassionate to relatives, and attentive to a husband who did not give recognition to the part the wise counsel of his wife played in his success, were painful virtues.[19]

Some dissatisfaction with the limitations of the sphere of woman may account for the early expressions of feminine superiority. But wide dissatisfaction did not appear until the next century when an increasing number of women looked upon their sphere as the subtle and treacherous means used by men to exploit and enslave females. In the eighteenth century, such thoughts betrayed a mis-understanding of the decrees of God, nature, custom, reason, tradition, and an orderly society.

The Social Role of Woman

Although woman's primary function was in the home, her sphere

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[19]Boudier de Villemert, p. 97; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 180-181, 212.

encompassed definite social responsibilities. Nature concurred by planting in the hearts of every individual a need for social intercourse with the opposite sex which provided the opportunity for each to correct its natural deficiencies. The reciprocity of the sexes also protected woman. Although entrusted to man, the relationship was such he dared not violate it without suffering serious consequences. She played the indispensable role in their social contact by having power over the hearts of men.[20]

Woman and man possessed an innate desire for approbation but different ways to satisfy it. She got praise through graceful accomplishments, a cheerful personality, a chaste but invigorating conversation, and a gentle behavior. The female bosom swelled with anxiety to please those about her and especially her husband after marriage. Likewise, the male sought the felicity derived from the smile, applause, and attachment of a woman, an instinct which influenced him in a thousand ways and on a thousand occasions.[21] Although her character was more uniform than his, nature varied her natural gifts to coincide with the various tastes of men. These differing abilities also gave

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[20]James Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women (1st American ed.; Boston, 1781), pp. 22, 3, 4, 5, 37, 29, in EAI no. 19408; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 15, 105, 25-27; Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, Letters (3d ed.; New York: Rivington and Gaine, 1775), III, 75-76, I, 134; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 20, 21, 105, 73; Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., II, 47; Burton, p. 45; Ward (1794), p. 71; Rousseau, pp. 322-324.

[21]Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, pp. 2-3, 49; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 106; Burton, p. 73; Chesterfield, III, 75-76.

society its delightful variety.[22]

The writers who acknowledged the immutable effects of femininity upon society disagreed over whether they were destructive or constructive. Those who believed in the innate evilness of woman's character claimed her influence was mostly bad while those who believed she was innately good described her activities as mostly good. The former said there were few "good women," and the latter found few "bad" ones.

Destructive effects. The general detrimental effects of woman reached to the length and the breadth of society. Nothing undermined the self-confidence of a man or encouraged him to forget his faith, marriage vows, parental duties and livelihood as an intriguing woman.[23] To raise passions and appetities was her ambition; to touch the heart, to stimulate thought, to be an agreeable companion, or to be a steady friend contradicted her nature. Once the passions and appetities began to grow dull, insipid, sicken and die away, turning marriage into a burden, the vain, capricious, empty and insignificant character of this woman revealed itself. She was the wife, in the words of Solomon, who pulled down the house, corrupted the bones, and made a man weary in his own home. It was better for him to dwell on the housetop exposed to the elements or to live among wild animals in the wilderness than to live with such a woman.[24]

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[22]Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 316; More, pp. 1, 4; Chesterfield, II, 158.

[23]Edward Ward, Female Policy Detected, or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (Boston, 1786), p. 2, in EAI no. 20119.

[24]Ward (1794), pp. 59-60.

The lewd female sex who fostered all vices, mischiefs, and miseries in society was associated with nearly every notorious murder, fraud, or villany. The miseries of the world rode in her lap.[25] Once injured she used her wiles to plot, scheme and even to manipulate men to facilitate her revenge. Her violent hatred roared like a furnace and could not be calmed until its octopus-like tenacles filled every corner of society with hatred, suspicion, and bitterness.[26]

Every town had a woman or group of women whose rank, beauty, and fortune enabled them to control society as their husbands controlled shops, factories, governments, and manors. As female sovereigns, they decided what fashion and characters would be the vogue like ministers of state and favorites of court decided the destiny of those in the government. Their control of the access to and continuance in the social circles gave them the power to destroy or establish a man's character. When they gave a young man a passport to their realms of politeness, others accepted him; even those who disliked him dared not countermand the decision. Due to the weakness of man, these women had enough influence in all courts, explained Lord Chesterfield, to absolutely determine a man's fate in the world of important people.[27]

With their lack of solid reasoning, unstable character,

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[25] Ibid., pp. 42-43, 58, 61. See also Chapter IV, "The Character of Woman."

[26] Ibid., p. 40.

[27] Chesterfield, II, 190; Thomas Jefferson, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb (Washington, D. C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904-1905), VI, 81-82, VII, 227-228.

inconsistency, and fickle passions which overturned any system of consequential conduct, an ambitious man could not afford to offend any of them. If he did, the whole group would tear him to pieces. Since little passions or humors always broke upon their best resolutions, a man had to be extremely cautious in their presence.[28]

The power possessed by so many unsteady women in strategic places forced men to manipulate the fair sex with dissimulation, flattery, officious attentions, masculine coquetry, and striking attire. The object was to manage, please, and flatter them, but never to let them discover the least marks of contempt. In this way, they would ingratiate a man with the powerful people. All those forms of deception turned the natural social relations of the sexes into a vicious struggle in which men dreaded the hatred of the female sovereigns more than the advantages of their friendship.[29] Thus the successful man not only anticipated all their little fancies and inclinations but eagerly sought to do all of their "little commissions" and to listen patiently with seeming unction to their little grievances, troubles, and views.[30]

These innatists also accused the female sex of making amusement and pleasure the serious purpose of her life. The modish woman vindicated fashionable dissipation, idleness, and indolence, by pleas of constitutional weakness and the instinctive bent of woman for games, teas, gambling, horse racing, the beach, and parties. These "childish"

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[28]Chesterfield, I, 192-193, II, 67, III, 120.

[29]Ibid., III, 75-76, I, 192-193, II, 67.

[30]Ibid., II, 179-180, 190, III, 120.

ways of killing time were further excused by her economic ability to hire servants to perform her domestic duties.[31] She failed to realize that nature had established feminine work as a law, the observance of which constituted the glory of womanhood. She who did nothing, in some measure, returned to a state of non-existence. The misery of such a female could not be described, claimed Boudier de Villemert.[32] Hence it was time for the woman of leisure to return to her natural duties and use pleasure for a diversion.

Constructive effects. The constructive effects of the good woman, which were emphasized in the second half of the century, stemmed from her supposed superior moral faculties.[33] In simple terms, she had the moral or social talent, whereas man had the political talent. This talent naturally made her the arbiter of society. She understood the value of reputation, what produced, confirmed, and destroyed it as well as its ill effects when disregarded by people. She knew how far one could direct without showing an interest, or how far one could go even when it was known she was trying to direct, or to what degree it was necessary to serve men in order to govern them. By these delicate "sciences" which sprang from her moral faculties, she governed men and society.[34]

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[31]Burton, p. 45.

[32]Boudier de Villemert, pp. 25-26, 57; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 185.

[33]See Chapter IV, "The Character of Woman," pp. 66-67.

[34]Sketches of the History, Genius, Disposition, Accomplishments, Employments, Customs and Importance of the Fair Sex (Philadelphia: Samuel Sansom, 1796?), p. 99, in EAI no. 31688; /Antoine Leonard/

However woman lacked comprehensive views, the ability to choose between basic principles, and the insight to discern the man of talent for public life. She was not a good judge of talent, its extent or use. Neither were philosophic views of human life nor the habit of perceiving consequences compatible with her oversensitive imagination, simple reason and inability to follow a long concatenation of ideas. On any subject involving her passions and self-interest, she could not reason in a deliberate and candid manner; the acuteness and power of her passions totally suspended reason for a time. The rapidity of her imagination and intuition made her quite susceptible to prejudice and errors in the choice of men for government. Like Elizabeth of England, a high esteem of accomplishment led her to believe an agreeable man was a great man.[35] Thus woman had the talent of society rather than of government.

This talent, said Boudier de Villemert, made the female the mainspring which enlivened and kept society in perpetual motion. Because the dictates of the heart more than those of the head governed mankind, woman controlled the disposal of power even though man held it. According to the law of nature, she had as much authority over his heart as he had over her person. When she ruled, he only reigned. All that

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Thomas, Essay on the Character, Manners, and Genius of Woman in Different Ages, enlarged from the French by Mr. Russell (Philadelphia: R. Aitkin, 1774), II, 2-23, in EAI no. 13650.

[35] Sketches . . . of the Fair Sex, pp. 99-100, 101; William Alexander, The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time (Philadelphia: J. H. Dobelbower, 1796), II, 76, in EAI no. 29964.

was done in government and administrative affairs merely displayed her ascendency.[36]

A philosopher once claimed that if he could make the ballads of a country, it would not matter who made its laws, explained Benjamin Rush. He should have said let the ladies of a country receive a proper education, and they will make and administer the laws and form its manners and character. Therefore, since men lived under female government all of their lives, a virtuous woman was better than a fickle mistress.[37]

With the power to give men and society whatever form she wished, she inspired either the most exalted virtues in young men or corrupted them by effeminate pleasure. When properly applied, public and private benefit resulted.[38] However, few people realized the power of its quiet, unobtrusive nature. Unlike the periodical inundation of a river which belonged to the male, it descended in all seasons like the sweet dew from heaven giving sustenance to every plant of the field. It was these small, recurring blessings which perpetually revitalized human society.[39]

The condition of woman in every age and country then, indicated with great precision the degree of civilization a people had attained.

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[36]Boudier de Villemert, p. 15; Rousseau, p. 443.

[37]Benjamin Rush, Thoughts upon Female Education (Philadelphia: Pritchard and Hall, 1787), p. 20, in EAI no. 20691.

[38]Boudier de Villemert, pp. 13-14, 69, 85; Burton, pp. 37, 45.

[39]Gisborne, p. 8.

Her elevation went hand-in-hand with human progress. Savage and primitive nations treated woman cruelly, but when they began to emerge from barbarism, every new step forward was usually marked by a better treatment and a more reasonable estimation of woman. The process slowed precipitably when men refused to free her civilizing capabilities, but once loosed, great things were possible.[40]

The gulf continually widened between mankind and barbarism with every improvement in the opinions and conduct of men towards the female sex. In the primitive state the male thought of woman as merely a plaything, while in civilized countries he valued her character and manners which turned the passions of men into useful endeavors, encouraged education, and guarded the domestic scenes from misery. It was the social intercourse between woman and man that led to polite manners, sentimental feelings, and the arts. When an age grew indifferent to her opinions and judgment, the amenities of civilization fell into contempt, and the worst stage of degradation soon prevailed.[41] Custom, tradition, and law sought to guarantee the beneficial use of her omnipresent influence.[42]

The pre-eminence of woman's moral faculties gave her the responsibility to reform man and society, said the innatists. Although she had the greater influence, natural reciprocity allowed each sex to

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[40]Ibid., p. 12; Rousseau, p. 353; Alexander, I, 110-111, 131; Sketches . . . of the Fair Sex, pp. 36-37.

[41]Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, pp. 4-5; Rousseau, p. 353; Alexander, I, 337.

[42]Burton, pp. 31, 37; Boudier de Villemert, p. 86.

take advantage of the superior qualities of the other. The female exchanged humanity, politeness, cheerfulness, taste, and sentiment for knowledge, wisdom, and sedateness. And under favorable circumstances, this mutuality was a rich source of improvement.[43]

Some writers like Boudier de Villemert combined their ideas on the inferiority and superiority of woman in curious ways. Woman, he said, could independently perfect her limited mind, but man could not perfect his without her aid. When she was brought to the very essence of wisdom, man soon followed.[44] Should one sex apply itself to either reason or folly, the other soon followed, with this exception that man could lead woman astray, but generally, her influence was far greater on him. The delicacy of the female sex along with the restraints of custom generally made her the last to be corrupted; the corrupting effect of the few abandoned women was the exception. Since society permitted man a thousand irregularities which it forbade woman, her character was a firmer anchor for society. She should actively seek to stabilize civilization even if it meant reforming her husband and the friends around him.[45]

The idea of woman's moral superiority led to the doctrine of brutal, primitive man whose only salvation lay in contact with woman. His insensibility and savage disposition exercised against the brute creation in his search for subsistence and against his fellow men in

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[43]Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 105.

[44]Boudier de Villemert, p. 104.

[45]Ibid.

wars, tortures, and inquisitions deeply stained his character. These exalted animal appetites generally eradicated all vestiges of humanity and sentimental feelings in him. In modern times his ferocious temper continued to ravage the tender sex from earliest childhood.[46]

Nevertheless the female sex could stem the anarchy in the souls of men by purposefully taming the character of the whole race of men while they were still at their mothers' knees. Only when she gave up "French fashions," dissipation, indolence, vain amusements, and coquetry could she make mankind the pupil and disciple of female institutions. The relentless influence of her sensibility, love, modesty, and chastity would smooth the rugged nature of man by imparting gentleness and humanity to him. In turn, he would replace his degraded view of woman with a recognition of her true value in human affairs.[47]

The frequent social contact with the female sex was next to the "wisdom from above," hence the best road to virtue and protection from vice, wrote James Fordyce, a widely read author in the United States. Virtuous men habitually traced their virtue to a good woman, those in dissipation to keeping company with a bad woman. He predicted that in the hereafter many men would testify with everlasting gratitude before God that they owed their virtuous lives chiefly to constant contact with women of good character. He further suggested that a man could not be a noble, worthy, or religious individual who did not respect

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[46]Alexander, I, 220; Thomas, I, 1-10.

[47]Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., II, 23; Gisborne, pp. 8-9; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 30; Alexander, I, 225.

feminine virtue.[48] The best security for a young man against the attractions of a dissolute life, claimed Noah Webster, was a fondness for the companionship and conversation of an upright woman.[49]

Constant social intercourse with the female sex, softened the hearts of men, calmed their temper, and enlightened their genius. The courtesy, respectfulness, and amiability which they received could not be acquired elsewhere. When secluded from the society of women, men became sloven in dress, rough in manner, uncouth in gait, harsh in speech, irreligious in sentiments, and brutal in passions. This rough, uncultivated animal threatened society with his gross appetites which gradually became almost ungovernable--a fact well proved, said William Alexander, by the behavior of sailors just in from a long voyage.[50] Even Lord Chesterfield admitted that the man who did not have the last polish from women would never be amiable among men--only estimable.[51]

The women who complied with the rules governing their social behavior greatly enhanced their reforming power. If their conversation and conduct were pictures of simplicity and grace, of ease and politeness, of sprightness and modesty, they would inspire men to higher motives of behavior. If they seldom disputed and never wrangled,

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[48]Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, pp. 45-46, 49, 50.

[49]Webster, p. 28.

[50]Alexander, I, 324, 334.

[51]Chesterfield, III, 75-76, I, 134; Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, p. 14; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 88; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 19-20; Rush, p. 25; Gisborne, p. 9.

listened with attention to the opinions of others, delivered their own with diffidence, sought to please before being pleased, they would in the noblest sense conquer men. Should they be chaste without severity, frank but delicate, polite without offense, sincere without hypocrisy, informed but modest, pious without cant, elegant without ostentation, and good-natured without slovenness, men would automatically improve in their presence.[52] However, women were cautioned to avoid the reformation of the dissolute, debauched men known as rakes. Such was too hazardous and usually bore little fruit.[53]

Woman could direct her efforts toward more specific goals than a reformation of men in general. She who practiced only domestic accomplishments neglected the specific duty of exerting the proper influence over the character and conduct of her husband. A deliberate campaign to improve him would add zest and purpose to domesticity.[54] The innatists cautioned the wife not to seek too much power over her husband's conduct, for she might inadvertently violate the natural boundaries between the sexes. The resulting quarrels and contentions would disrupt the home and reverberate throughout society. A forward wife was admonished to regard the words of St. Paul as though they had been pronounced solely for her sake. "I . . . beseech you /to/ walk

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[52]Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, pp. 42, 50; More, pp. 16-18.

[53]Burton, p. 108; Gisborne, pp. 173-179.

[54]Gisborne, pp. 180, 182-183; Burton, p. 43; The American Spectator, p. 202; Cotton Mather, Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion (Cambridge: Samuel Phillips, 1692), p. 79, in EAI no. 624.

worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called . . . /with/ all lowliness, . . . meekness, /and/ longsuffering. . . ."[55]

In the marriage where the wife was more intelligent than her husband, all efforts at reform would be thwarted if she appeared to govern him. She ran the risk of losing his affection forever and gaining the contempt of her peers. To lead him unknowingly from his bad opinions to her better ones with such subtlety and discretion that it seemed to be entirely his own effort was her task. And if she claimed any merit for his reformation, all her efforts would be for nought.[56] Hence the less power a wife seemed to have, the more she actually had.[57]

Another specific goal for woman's benevolence was better treatment for old maids. Unable to fulfill their purpose in life without a husband, they remained non-entities in another woman's home. More understanding was to be extended to these unfortunate women.[58] However, it was not until the next century that writers vigorously championed the cause of the unmarried woman on the grounds she could fulfill her purpose and be happy outside of marriage. Marriage was not looked upon as the only goal in life for a woman by these later authors.

Woman's social role also included relieving the wants and

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[55]Eph. 4: 1-3. See Gisborne, pp. 184-186.

[56]The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 159.

[57]Boudier de Villemert, paraphrased Rousseau, p. 58; Gisborne, pp. 183-184.

[58]Gisborne, pp. 297-299.

distresses of the female inhabitants of the neighborhood by founding institutions for their welfare. By the end of the century a number of Female Asylums dotted the American scene from Boston to Philadelphia. Woman's ameliorating influence was to be used on a daughter, niece, or any female who came under her immediate superintendence, regardless of whether these women were her superiors, equals, or inferiors. She could encourage their improvement by deliberate advice, incidental comment, and silent example. Even the aged woman was not exempt from reforming exertions. She was to follow the advice of St. Paul in teaching the younger women to be chaste and discreet keepers of the home. Woman was to form institutions for the education of children, but not to let these activities interfere with her domestic duties. Reform outside the home was to absorb only her free time.[59]

Conclusion

Eighteenth century America limited woman's sphere to domestic and social responsibilities. The former encompassed the management of the home--domestic skills, elegant accomplishments, and intellectual training necessary to complement the above. Although she was given little part in the emerging industrial revolution, she was considered morally stronger than man. With this superiority and the reciprocal benefits of the social intercourse of the sexes, she governed society. The gradual acceptance of feminine moral superiority increased her social function. The rate and direction of progress rested in her

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[59] Ibid., pp. 295-296; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 73 which was based upon Titus 2: 3-5.

hands, and if civilization were to increase the distance from barbarism she had to reform men and society. Concomitantly the acceptance of masculine moral inferiority enhanced the value of woman. Of course, her efforts were never to transcend the natural perimeter of the female sphere. Confident that they could direct the activities of women, Americans failed to realize the place which feminine superiority could occupy in the reformation of the world. Later generations found this out.

CHAPTER VII

THE RELIGION OF WOMAN

The Innate Religious Nature of Woman

Woman's sexual nature affected her in another way. It made her more religious than the male. Her physical timidity naturally made her more reverent; the quickness of her sensibility rendered her more susceptible to spiritual impressions; her modesty engrained the feelings of devotion; and her active imagination multiplied the awful punishments waiting for the sinner. Because religion was a matter of the heart, her superior moral faculty instinctively promulgated religious fervor and piety.[1]

Other factors combined to strengthen this religious inclination. If she hoped to please man, she could not have a nonchalant attitude towards religion, for he considered feminine softness, modesty, and sensibility synonymous with religion. Indifference was associated with hardness and masculinity which, of all her faults, most irked him. Naturally fearful, she sought solace in prayer, fasting, and attendance

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[1]James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (new ed.; Philadelphia, 1787), pp. 213, 236, 245, 260, 285, in EAI no. 20362; Hannah More, Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies (Philadelphia, 1786), pp. 46-52, in EAI no. 19810; The Lady's Pocket Library (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1792), p. 89, in EAI no. 24452; Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London, 1798), pp. 180-183, in EAI no. 21184; Cotton Mather, Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion (Cambridge: Samuel Phillips, 1692), p. 26, in EAI no. 624.

at church, especially after man had withdrawn his protection.[2]

From birth the environment given to the female aptly prepared her for piety. Religious instruction in isolation from the temptations of the world dominated her curriculum while her counterpart learned the pagan ideas in the classics. The severity of her education enhanced her stronger sense of shame and modesty, the insignia of sainthood.[3] This religious nature clearly affected New England, noted Timothy Dwight, where women made up two-thirds of the church memberships.[4]

Her simple reason prevented her from deducing rules of faith. Unable to understand the deeper matters of religion, external influences drove her here and there until she was either above or beyond the truth. Her tendency to be extreme in everything made her either overly pious or excessively reckless. Since the terrors of strictness made orthodoxy a tyrant and loose morals brought it into contempt, woman always had too much or too little religion. She needed an authoritarian religion to teach her what to believe rather than the reasons for it. Serious results occurred if she investigated theological questions beyond her ability. Faith attached to these half-understood ideas made her either a fanatic or an unbeliever.[5]

Feminine docility made it possible for her to follow the creed

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[2]The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 92; Fordyce, p. 248.

[3]More, p. 71; Gisborne, p. 183.

[4]Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York (New Haven, 1821-1822), IV, 474; Fordyce, p. 237.

[5]Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1911), pp. 340, 344.

of her parents or husband without feelings of guilt. This malleability blotted out all errors which she might commit by obeying a false faith of either a father or husband.[6]

Hannah More, whose books were the woman's social bible in America, told women they had a special mental capacity for religion. Even though they were excluded from an education in belles-lettres, they could surpass men in their proper realm of study, the scriptures. This was possible because woman had the same mental capacities for religion as man, but more opportunities to study. A firm believer in the sexed-mind of woman, More only liberalized this one mental faculty of woman. Even then it never formed a substantial part of More's thought.[7]

True religion taught woman about heaven and made her feel she was always in the presence of God who saw her thoughts, deeds, virtue, and pleasures. It taught her to be religious without hypocrisy, pious without enthusiasm, good without ostentation, suffer evil without murmur, and observe all her religious rites with punctuality. The truly religious woman was incapable of abuse, impiety, and fanaticism,[8] and never let her mind wander beyond the simple rules of her faith. All books, conversation, and controversy which might cause her to question the principles of eternal salvation were avoided. What she read and heard inspired piety, devout affections, and proper conduct. She never let a minister usurp the role of her husband, who was her religious

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[6]Ibid., p. 340.

[7]More, p. 72.

[8]Rousseau, pp. 341, 344; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 170.

teacher, for the former generally tainted her with the narrowness of his sect. Thus led from the path of truth, she readily accepted superstition, fortune-telling, astrology, witchcraft, charms, omens, and apparitions instead of divine truths.[9]

A prescribed religion gave woman specific help in preserving her reputation. Piety and reverence satisfied the demands of public opinion for outward evidence of good character. Godliness of the heart aroused the virtues and made her despise dissipation, gossip, and the appearance of evil. No better preservative of a female's reputation existed.[10]

She also had the dangerous, but most honorable, task of living uncorrupted in society. The fear of God encouraged prudent conversation and the domestic, elegant, and intellectual accomplishments which protected her from the sins of the world. As for love, "true religion" certainly cured her of infatuation.[11]

By the latter part of the eighteenth century, a faint image of the conception of the "beastly," "primitive," and "depraved" man also appeared in religion. However, this concept was more universally accepted in the next century. Nevertheless, some writers warned women that the many fallen females were monuments to male falsehood. The very

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[9]The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 89, 90, 128-131, 144; Gisborne, lecture xxv; Erasmus Darwin, A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education (Philadelphia, 1798), p. 188, in EAI no. 33601.

[10]More, pp. 15, 72-73; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 123, 176; Fordyce, pp. 222, 286.

[11]Fordyce, pp. 222, 227.

men who were entrusted with her virtue often became beasts during a fit of passion and destroyed her reputation, wrote James Fordyce. No woman should fawn over these traitors whose aim was to use her for amusement rather than for a helpmate and companion. Woman should abhor them! Religion protected her from these depraved men by exposing their superficial attentions which were easily learned in the school of fashion and so frequently used to hide a hollow, unfeeling soul.[12]

As woman's distrust of man grew, writers advised her to let religion replace him as the central urge of her life. Her first duty was to God, not to puny, vicious, selfish, imperfect man. The suspicion also spread to feminine dependence. It became easier for woman to see it as man's scheme to guarantee himself a sensual and economic slave.[13] The damage wrought by suggesting she obey and be dependent on God more than man was inestimable. It encouraged women to unite as the female sex for a struggle with the males.

The woman who wrapped herself in the mantle of religion received the strength to face the ills of life with a happy, serene face even though her heart might be breaking with despair. She bore the tribulations of life with feminine fortitude, for she could not drown her sorrows in business or dissipation as did many men when misfortune

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[12] Ibid., pp. 228, 230, 231.

[13] Ibid., pp. 210, 232-233; Hester Mulso Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady (5th ed.; Worcester, 1783), II, 194, 241-252, in EAI no. 17869; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 128, 212; Gisborne, pp. 165-167.

struck.[14] With absolute resignation to the will of God, she had an unalterable peace of mind too firm to be shaken by adversity, bias, poverty, ingratitude, and even the death of loved ones. Not only did it guard against the weaknesses of youth, but provided a sure refuge in her riper years[15] when the ills of life appeared, love declined, and a husband grew cool towards her. With the decay of beauty the world ceased to pay her homage and her reason told her not to court it any longer. Should she know only the maxims of the world, a vacuum of thought and employment would make her declining years the most irksome situation of life. Faith alone would calm this uneasiness, comfort her during misfortunes, reconcile her with the world, and be her companion when her husband ceased to need her. The true friend and refuge of woman was her authoritarian religion.[16]

Woman as an Eternal Soul

One religious problem which plagued eighteenth century America was whether or not woman had a soul. Her lower place in the scale of beings suggested to some authors that she might not have a soul while others believed a feminine spirit, if it existed, differed from that in either man or beast and would occupy a different place in heaven. The popular but erroneous view of the Mohammedan version of heaven was used

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[14] The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 89, 176; Gisborne, pp. 310-313; Fordyce, p. 213; Mary Hopkins Pilkington, A Mirror for the Female Sex; Historical Beauties for Young Ladies (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1799), p. 10, in EAI no. 36117.

[15] The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 90, 171.

[16] Ibid., p. 177.

to prove the segregation of woman and man in the hereafter.[17]

A Scottish clergyman argued that the book of Revelation said there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. This could only have been possible in the absence of women. Therefore, they lacked immortality. He ended optimistically by saying it was better for them because they would not have to answer for the confusion, disturbances, and evil they had introduced into the world.[18]

Even Mary Wollstonecraft acknowledged the uncertainty existing in her generation over whether woman had a soul or was the connecting link between man and the animals.[19] Aaron Burr hoped to convince the world through his daughter, Theodosia, that women had souls.[20] Thomas Branagan accused mothers of being true Mohammedans. The attention they gave their sons implied that their daughters lacked souls, hence were

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[17] Sketches of the History, Genius, Disposition, Accomplishments, Employments, Customs and Importance of the Fair Sex (Philadelphia: Samuel Sansom, 1796?), pp. 114-115, in EAI no. 31688; William Alexander, The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time (Philadelphia: J. H. Dobelbower, 1796), II, 46-47; Mary Pierrepont Wortley, Lady Montagu, Letters . . . Written During her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa . . . (4th ed.; New York, 1766), p. 124, in EAI no. 10393; according to Lady Montagu, the "Mahometans" believed women were of a more inferior nature than men. They were not admitted into the Paradise destined for men, but went to a place of happiness appointed for souls of an inferior order.

[18] Sketches . . . of the Fair Sex, p. 115.

[19] Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), pp. 39-40. See Chapter I, pp. 10-11.

[20] Matthew L. Davis, Memoirs of Aaron Burr (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1855), I, 362.

for the sensual convenience of men.[21]

Many writers who understood the anxiety of women over this subject assured them of the sameness of soul and eternal immortality of the sexes. In other words, woman could hope for salvation and glorification the same as man.[22]

This theological idea which tended to elevate woman to full soulhood had far-reaching implications for the relationship of the sexes on the earth and in the hereafter. The consequential nature of equality in heaven added a new dimension to the emerging ideology about woman. She was told her future life depended on how she conducted herself in this life. She had to constantly consider the everlasting consequences of her actions and not trust her salvation to behavior based on the blind impulses of chance, caprice, and ignorance. She had to return to God an immaculate body and soul, developed talents, a cultivated mind, and a mature character before she could enter into everlasting felicity. On the other hand, failure to heed the consequences of "unrighteous" behavior would rob her of eternal happiness, salvation, and immortality.[23]

The precarious balance of her salvation necessitated active reform, scrupulous attention to duties, and being an avid doer of good.

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[21]Thomas Branagan, The Excellency of the Female Character Vindicated (2d ed.; Philadelphia: J. Rakestraw, 1808), pp. 151-153, 182-183; The American Spectator, or Matrimonial Preceptor (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1797), p. 15, in EAI no. 31725.

[22]More, p. 69; /Mrs. Peddle/, Rudiments of Taste (Chambersburg, Pa.: Dover and Harper, 1797), p. 21, in EAI no. 32643.

[23]Fordyce, pp. 58, 208; Gisborne, p. 9; /William Kendrick/, The Whole Duty of Woman (Philadelphia: Crukshank, 1788), pp. 61-62, in EAI no. 21184.

All rewards rested entirely upon how well she built her house of good works.[24]

The consequential nature of religion forged a new weapon for the women. Their expectation of being like man in the hereafter raised the question over whether sex was limited to the physical body or did her soul have a sex too? Was the sexual nature limited to this life or would it continue in the hereafter? The answers to these questions had far-reaching consequences for the woman's movement in the next century.

Had the eighteenth century given the soul of woman a sex, a stronger basis for the innate nature of woman would have been established. It could have been argued effectively that a separate sphere existed in heaven for the female even though marriage or childbirth did not. Her subordinate position in this life was merely preparation for a similar position in the life to come. The assumption of females in heaven implied intimate relationships of the sexes, childbirth, and family life, but tacit acknowledgement of this proved too much for the times. Despite the fact that the idea of sexed souls would have killed most attempts to liberalize thought about the duties and place of woman in life, the eighteenth century turned its back on this theory and chose a more hazardous course.

The person who did explore the sexual nature idea to its logical conclusions was Emanuel Swedenborg. Although the soul had no sex, man and woman retained their different sexual natures in the hereafter. Man remained a male and woman a female. Neither could exchange their

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[24]Gisborne, pp. 183-184.

original nature for that of the other. Their spiritual inclination which led to earthly marriage remained after death to form heavenly marriage between two minds and souls. It was a spiritual intercourse of their minds and souls as earth marriage had been of the flesh. The offspring of heavenly "conjugal love" was "love" and "wisdom."

The subordinate position of woman on earth set the pattern for heaven, with this exception. The animosity of the sexes on the earth which was caused by the tyranny of the male and the disobedience of the female was missing. This was the meaning which Swedenborg found in the sexual nature of woman.[25]

However, eighteenth century America accepted the view of Mary Astell and Samuel Sewall.[26] The soul had no sex, they said. It was neither male nor female. Femininity and masculinity were temporary conditions which ended at death. After, there was no way to tell which soul had been a male or female during mortality because femininity and masculinity were matters of different bodies, not different souls.

These comments raised a number of questions. First, if the soul of woman had no sex, why did her body have one? Why did she have a feminine nature in mortality and not after? Why were certain souls female and others male? If the soul was uniform in everyone, why were

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[25]Emanuel Swedenborg, The Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugal Love after which follow the Pleasures of Insanity Concerning Scortatory Love, trans. from the Latin (Philadelphia: Francis and Robert Bailey, 1796), pp. 192-194, 69-70, 201-202, 195, in EAI no. 31257.

[26]Mary Sumner Benson, Women in Eighteenth-Century America, a Study of Opinion and Social Usage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), p.

the souls in female bodies given limited physiques and minds? Why did the soul who was a male on earth have greater opportunities to gain knowledge, develop character, and do the other things which pleased God? Why should woman hide her talent in the ground while man increased his five fold? Why should woman be refused the same opportunities to prepare her soul to stand beside the one in man at the final judgment? Why did God seem more partial to man be creating him in His glory? Or was it possible that the true relationship of the sexes had been lost in antiquity? Was it possible that her traditional role had arisen from the felt necessities of the times, then over the years became divine pronouncements? If so, why not change them until they agreed with the doctrine of unsexed souls? Why should not the equality of celestial beings be reflected during mortality?

The eighteenth century writers admitted it seemed unjust for some souls to be females and others males during mortal probation. However, first impressions were misleading. The soul in the female body was not at a disadvantage. God was just to all and provided a way for each to gain the same salvation and degree of glory.[27] The soul in the female body had an innate nature to do special duties and functions. How well these were done determined its salvation and degree of glory. But if it bypassed them in favor of those assigned to the male, its salvation and glory were imperiled. At the Judgment Day, the soul in the female body would be judged from a different set of requirements.

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[27]Enos Hitchcock, A Discourse on Education (Providence: Wheeler, 1785), p. 15, in EAI no. 19040.

Thus all souls stood equal in the eyes of God.

The soul in the female body had certain compensations which offset the apparent weaknesses inherent in femininity. The religious nature of the female body gave it more spiritual insight, hence made it the moral guardian of mankind in the eyes of God. The grosser sex looked to her for the pathway to righteousness. Her charm and beauty equalized his stronger physique, and her wit was more than a match for his reason.

The doctrine of unsexed souls had the potential to promote a struggle of the sexes for pre-eminence in the present and future times. The intimate lives of wife and husband often made it impossible to distinguish between her professed affection and the dissimulation used to satisfy his biological urges in exchange for subtle advantages in the struggle. Even in so-called happy marriages, the wife constantly tried to guide the affairs and destiny of her husband either directly or indirectly. This natural antagonism sprang from the soul in the female body who felt itself equal to that soul in the male, said the innatist, but believed itself restricted by rules and regulations laid down by the soul in the male. It resisted any attempt to increase its disability.[28]

The idea of the unsexed spiritual part of woman caused some to question whether her mind had a sex or not. Boudier de Villemert was

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[28]Rousseau, p. 340; Noah Webster, A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), p. 410, in EAI no. 23053; Gisborne, p. 185; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 203; Fordyce, p. 232.

one of the first innatists to de-sex the understanding of woman; the rest of her mind he left sexed.[29] He helped set the pattern for de-sexing the mind of woman in the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

Although eighteenth century America demanded different religious behavior from each sex, some modification of this view took place late in the century. Feminine reliance on man for doctrinal guidance was challenged by self-reliance which implied a larger role for woman in religion. By giving woman an unsexed soul and hope of life after death, the innatists had to explain whether or not her life, which was different from man's, affected her final reward. They concluded that each sex would be judged by how well it obeyed the natural laws of its respective sphere. But the sameness of soul in man and woman suggested equality in heaven to other writers. They saw another consequential scheme--a different kind of behavior which entitled woman to the same heavenly reward if she had obediently done the duties of her sphere. The unsexed soul in woman could oppose all unreasonable obstacles placed in the way of her spiritual and mental growth by the unsexed soul in man. His soul should not have the power to hamper her soul in its eternal progression. Hence she could actively demand that he modify many of his attitudes and customs towards her. This theological development gave the woman's movement in the next century a religious justification for reform activities.

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[29] /Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert/, The Ladies Friend (New Haven: Abel-Morse, 1789), p. 85, in EAI no. 21708.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EDUCATION OF WOMAN

The Dominant Modes of Feminine Education

The education of woman, like her religion, came under careful scrutiny in the eighteenth century. In the view of Americans a complete education made her mistress of the receipt book and the needle. However, by the close of the century, her intellectual abilities were being extended beyond those required for housekeeping and sewing.[1] Concomitantly a lively discussion erupted over the kind of education woman should be given.

The investigations revealed that females received either domestic or accomplished training.[2] The former prevailed in the lower class where the salary of the husband provided the necessities of life. The strictest domestic economy was imperative, and should the wife need

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[1]Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London, 1798), p. 13, in EAI no. 33801; John Adams, Familiar Letters of John Adams and his Wife, Abigail Adams, During the Revolution, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1875), pp. 339-340.

[2]Gisborne, p. 154; James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (new ed.; Philadelphia, 1787), pp. 22-23, 355, in EAI no. 20362; Benjamin Franklin, Reflections on Courtship and Marriage (Philadelphia, 1746), pp. 2-3, in EAI no. 5772; Hannah More, Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies (Philadelphia, 1786), pp. 56-57, in EAI no. 19810; John Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners (3d ed.; Dublin, 1794), p. 56, in EAI no. 26722; Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1911), p. 327.

to supplement the family income, domestic training qualified her to be a cook, chamber maid, and general servant. A combination of domestic and accomplished education suited the middle class wife who could afford domestic help. Thus freed from part of her duties, she acquired the accomplishments suited to her social responsibilities. An accomplished education with little or no domestic training suited the upper class wife whose financial status provided her with a complete retinue of servants. She had only to oversee household economy and the supervision of servants. Practically free of household duties, she spent her time perfecting the prerequisites of personal dress and charm for her society.[3]

The Evils of Domestic and Accomplished Education

Near the end of the century, an increasing number of people found both the domestic and the social models defective. Each failed to prepare woman for the duties of her sphere and the eventualities of life--the decay of beauty, the demise of passion, the gradual separation of husband and wife, and the loneliness of old age. Specifically, cooking, washing, ironing, cleaning, and sewing made the domestic model a kind of superior servant who dearly loved gossip, tale-bearing, fault finding, and bigotry.[4] She could fill her husband's stomach but not his heart, keep his clothes free of wrinkles and dirt but not his

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[3]Burton, p. 68; William Alexander, The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time (Philadelphia: J. H. Dobelbower, 1796), I, 97-99, in EAI no. 29964.

[4]Page Smith, John Adams (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962), II, 657-658.

character, keep a house clean but not be hospitable, be the servant but not the wife, and raise children but not educate them. By the power of her needle, she could dress her children while her word and deed had little influence on their behavior. She could neither distinguish true worship from superstition nor put the simple doctrines of morality into practice without guidance.[5]

The accomplished education taught dancing, singing, painting, and fancy needlework. It made woman use pleasant and delightful conversation, behave properly, and accentuate her beauty by dress and cosmetics. Cultivation enhanced her person and gave birth to some diversions, pleasantries, and amusements in life. Timothy Dwight, President of Yale, favored such accomplishments as long as they made woman amiable, useful, and happy. But he opposed their use for selfish purposes.[6]

On the other hand, the accomplished woman tended to despise domestic concerns[7] and often squandered the income of her father or husband on fine apparel, parties, games, and gambling in the search for gaiety and leisure. Her greatest ambition was to attract the flattery of every fool instead of the approbation of God. Personal adornment was her idol. "What folly! What madness!" exclaimed James Fordyce, for a

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[5]Burton, pp. 14-15, 55-56.

[6]Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York (New Haven, 1821-1822), I, 515; Thomas Jefferson, The Works of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), XII, 92; /Pierre Joseph Boudier de Villemert/, The Ladies Friend (New Haven: Abel-Morse, 1789), pp. 100-101, in EAI no. 21708.

[7]/Thomas Day/, The History of Sandford and Merton (Boston: Etheridge, 1796), pp. 106-107, in EAI no. 30316; Dwight, I, 515.

woman to lavish the principle portion of her time on decorating the body, which soon would be the prey of worms. Indeed, said Cotton Mather, the woman who placed her dress above prayer and religion did so at the peril of her salvation. Left without principles, said Hannah More, she believed life was one perpetual holiday. More often than not she was an exhibition instead of a cultured person.[8]

An accomplished education affected her physique and health. The arts used to heighten and repair beauty enfeebled and accelerated its decay. The daily six-hour toilet kept her nerves and "blood" in turbulent swirls. The constant exposure to anxiety, the agonies of rivalry, the disgrace of an unsuccessful conquest, and the despair of being outshone by a finer gown, kept her "animal spirits" boiling. The strain on her nerves shortened her youth and permanently damaged her health. The pursuit of trivial ornaments monopolized her weakened mind while her character suffered from the abnormal desire to please and the passion for attention. She always looked into her mirror but seldom into her character. Dissipation overshadowed solid achievements. In her hands, society became a gauntlet of feuding groups.[9]

When passion declined, her husband saw her as an insignificant creature with several children who increased his care and vexation. A

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[8]Fordyce, pp. 42, 43; Cotton Mather, Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion (Cambridge: Samuel Phillips, 1692), p. 58, in EAI no. 624; More, p. 56; Dwight, I, 515, 519; Burton, p. 56.

[9]Fordyce, pp. 41-44; Gisborne, pp. 93, 95-96; Matthew L. Davis, Memoirs of Aaron Burr (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1855), I, 361-362; Franklin, p. 12; More, p. 12, Burton, p. 56.

younger beauty would be first in his heart.[10]

The common modes of education produced either the domestic drudge or the social ornament. The first did the household duties and tended to become a narrow-minded "slave." The second relegated household duties to servants and became a social fly, if not an economic parasite, who played "the lady."

Mental Culture

The inadequacies of the above systems necessitated a new education for woman. This was mental culture, explained Hannah More, and it aimed to train the whole person, not merely the social and domestic capacities. Skills, beauty, and mind would be carefully polished to make woman practical, attractive, charming, and even-tempered.[11] The emphasis would be unfolding the mental powers of woman, helping her to acquire useful and interesting knowledge and teaching her "how to think," not "what to think." Yet it would honor the natural delicacy of her mind.[12]

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[10] Franklin, pp. 2-3.

[11] More, p. 57; The Lady's Pocket Library (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1792), p. 183, in EAI no. 24452; Gisborne, p. 199; Franklin, p. vii; /Mrs. Peddle/, Rudiments of Taste (Chambersburg, Pa.: Dover and Harper, 1797), pp. 21-26, in EAI no. 23643; Jefferson, XII, 90.

[12] Gisborne, p. 41; Enos Hitchcock, Memoirs of the Bloomsgrove Family (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), p. 15, in EAI no. 22570; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 189; Rousseau, p. 327; Noah Webster, A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), p. 406, in EAI no. 23053; Erasmus Darwin, A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education (Philadelphia, 1798), p. 32, in EAI no. 33601; Adams, pp. 207, 213, 218.

Domestic and accomplished education would be essential but subordinate parts of mental culture. The first would be taught in the home, the second in finishing schools. If girls learned to dance, sing, draw, cook, and scrub, it would not be to make them dancers, singers, painters, cooks, or washer-women but obedient daughters, faithful wives, prudent mothers, good mistresses, and worthy members of society. Accomplishments would be gained when she was not employed at more important concerns.[13] Neither would the graces be industriously cultivated at the expense of the virtues, nor the limbs at the expense of the mind; the heart would not overshadow the reason and judgment. Beauty would be combined with usefulness until the charms of woman sparkled. Mental culture would render her correct in manners, respectable in the family, and agreeable in society.[14]

This new education accepted a degree of "mental perfection" akin to that in man. Some proponents claimed a few women rivaled men in mental ability and certainly surpassed them in the moral powers.[15] Still, it respected the nature which excluded her weaker physique from the rough occupations in life and her less refined mind from scholarly studies. Her purpose in life barred her from politics, industry, commerce, war, and similar occupations; and her religious nature limited

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[13]More, p. 57; Boudier de Villemert, pp. 99, 100-101; Burton, pp. 57, 63-71; Fordyce, pp. 139-153.

[14]Webster, p. 28; Hitchcock, II, 31-35; Franklin, p. vii; More, p. 54.

[15]Boudier de Villemert, p. 5; Enos Hitchcock, A Discourse on Education (Providence: Wheeler, 1785), pp. 5-7, in EAI no. 19040; Dwight, IV, 457.

her to the less rigorous Christian duties and responsibilities.

Mental culture heeded her instinctive desire to learn[16] but stayed within the path prescribed by nature. Like the finest marble, she needed finishing, and her parents could either follow the decrees of nature or leave their daughter to mischievous environmental influences which could alter and confuse her native proclivity. Since habit strengthened the former, the first enduring impression and all succeeding ones had to be feminine. It was necessary to make sure the environment inculcated only those habits suited to her sex. For example, the passion to please could be used to teach a little girl drawing, cleanliness, and industry instead of letting inappropriate influences twist it into coquetry, loquacity, conceit, and cunning. The noble aim of mental culture was to properly mold every native inclination of woman.[17]

The woman who tried to cultivate masculine traits would be unable to abandon her natural traits or make those of the male compatible with her sexual nature, wrote the innatists. She would be an aberration of nature. The commonly accepted belief in female faults which man did not have was arrived at by using masculine traits as the standard of judgment, said Rousseau. In reality, these so-called faults were actually masculine virtues. Aggression and vigor were despicable in woman but virtues in man; modesty and timidity were her virtues but

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[16]Fordyce, pp. 202-203.

[17]Ibid., pp. 167-168; Boudier de Villemert, p. 55; Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., I, 148, 64, 84, II, 25, 44, 96-99; Rousseau, pp. 326, 331; Burton, p. 45; More, pp. 66-67; Hitchcock, Discourse . . ., p. 4. This latter quoted Psalms cxlvi: 2.

faults in man. Female education had to extoll these native characteristics of woman and prevent the acquisition of masculinity.[18]

Mental culture would also plan female education to support the life and ambitions of man. Different educational institutions would guarantee this. Co-education was treason to the plan of nature since the sexes tended to imitate each other in manners, ideas, and virtues when they were constantly together. The male who was educated with females of his own age became effeminate; and the female who was educated with males of her own age became masculine. The consequences injured woman more, for it was more difficult to efface improper environmental influences from girls than from boys.[19]

Last of all, female education had to be suited to the temper, government, and customs of the United States. Woman educated in the aristocratic tradition would be ill prepared for life in a republic. Mental culture, then, reflected the influence of the American Revolution and its democratic notions.[20]

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[18]Rousseau, pp. 327-328, 330, 331; Boudier de Villemert, p. 55; Burton, p. 55; Sketches of the History, Genius, Disposition, Accomplishments, Employments, Customs and Importance of the Fair Sex (Philadelphia: Samuel Sansom, 1796?), pp. 113-114, in EAI no. 31688; Emanuel Swedenborg, The Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugal Love after which follow the Pleasures of Insanity Concerning Scortatory Love, trans. from the Latin (Philadelphia: Francis and Robert Bailey, 1796), pp. 205-206, in EAI no. 31257.

[19]Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., I, 125-126, II, 22; Burton, pp. 84-85, 87; Rousseau, pp. 329, 330.

[20]Benjamin Rush, Thoughts upon Female Education (Philadelphia: Pritchard and Hall, 1787), pp. 1-32, in EAI no. 20691 (this book is written around this theme); Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., II, 47; Burton, p. 45.

Since an active mind needed a healthy body, the mental culturists encouraged woman to exercise her body every day. Mild exercise would strengthen the physique, calm the nerves, and activate the mind while vigorous exercise would wear out her muscles, overstimulate her nerves, and eventually bring on sickness. This physical training should differ greatly from that of man. It should develop grace in woman and strength in man; the former needed enough strength to do things gracefully and the latter to do things skillfully. She was not to be strong like man but healthy in order to bear him husky, well-proportioned sons and to lift some of the burden of life from his shoulders. Physical exercise was to develop a constitution suited to her mind.

However, woman was cautioned not to boast of robust health, for it violated the feminine image which men wanted. Men, she was told, naturally associated the idea of softness with a corresponding delicacy of constitution, and when a woman spoke of her great strength, extraordinary appetite, and ability to bear excessive fatigue, he immediately recoiled.[21] Then she would never find a husband or fulfill her purpose in life.

Mental culture was to be the product of individual study more than of formal education. Daily mental improvement after leaving school would make it unnecessary for an elaborate education. Much formal study would probably injure her mind while daily reading, study and reflection would give it the natural feminine vigor. Every woman was to set aside

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[21] The lady's Pocket Library, pp. 98-99; Burton, pp. 51-52; Rousseau, pp. 329-330; Gisborne, p. 65; Darwin, pp. 97-100.

a few hours each day for reflection even if she had to sacrifice most of her card playing, horse racing, partying, and other forms of dissipation. In this way the habits of idleness and volatility could be exchanged for mental steadiness.[22] The studies which best improved her mental faculties included geography and chronology to inform her of the location and time sequence of events, and history to show her the consequences of the various passions of man, the virtues to seek, and the vices to shun. Natural history and philosophy would teach her to deduce simple scientific truths from nature while astronomy would teach of the immensity of God's work. Only the certain and pleasant facts of science were suited for woman, wrote the mental culturists. Biography, memoirs, and travel accounts would widen her horizon. Literature and selected works of the imagination--poetry, painting, music, and allegories--completed the suggested list of studies for woman. However, woman had to forego her fondness for "novels or romances" if she wanted an urbane outlook.[23]

The goal of daily study was to produce mental beauty which man would desire above even cultivated physical beauty. When he grew tired of acting the lover and treating his wife like a mistress, when his

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[22]Gisborne, pp. 156, 143-155; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 142; Fordyce, pp. 170-171; Peddle, pp. 14-15; Caleb Bingham, The Young Lady's Accidence, or a Short and Easy Introduction to English Grammar (Boston: Greenleaf and Freeman, 1785), pp. iii-iv, in EAI no. 18934; Sketches . . .of the Fair Sex, p. 337.

[23]Boudier de Villemert, pp. 16-21; Hester Mulso Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady (5th ed.; Worcester, 1783), I, 5, in EAI no. 17869; Fordyce, pp. 162-164; Burton, lecture xii.

desires changed from the sensual to the mental, he would have a reasonable companion and true friend to go with him through the stages of life. If he had nothing in common with a beautiful wife, disgust would replace the liking which he had once had for her. Her barren mind would be the root of his inconstancy. Because he liked what was new and disliked familiar objects, she needed many resources to strike his fancy, placate his taste for novelty, and to make the same object give him the pleasures of inconstancy. She would of necessity have to practice coquetry and have a well stocked mind to compete with the courtesan as long as his passions had a flame.[24] When they were together time would not lie heavy on their hands, and neither would seek a third party to relieve himself or herself of boredom. Her ever-charming and agreeable qualities would extend her sway long after beauty had vanished.[25]

The mental culturists discussed several objections to their ideas. Mental culture could degenerate into pedantry, said Benjamin Franklin, who believed there was nothing more odious than a female pedant. Noah Webster, a strong supporter of female mental culture, claimed men naturally avoided "learned ladies." The "blue stockings," wrote another, lost all respect by their impertinent loquacity and conceit. Pride in a "superior understanding" could never reconcile itself

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[24]George Wright, The Lady's Miscellany (Boston: William T. Clap, 1797), p. 78, in EAI no. 33251; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 183; Rousseau, pp. 328-329.

[25]Boudier de Villemert, pp. 17-18, 22-23; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 225-226; Burton, pp. 36, 43, 76.

with lovely meekness and modest pliancy.[26]

The mental culturists hoped to discourage female pedantry by invoking her limited mind. Their classic argument was as follows. The sensible woman who set out to equal man soon learned that her utmost efforts made her mistress of knowledge which, in many ways, was inferior to that of a schoolboy. Since she could never be masculine in learning, the female world would never abound with metaphysicians, historians, or speculative philosophers. However, the woman whom nature endowed with more genius than the average female could pursue severer studies to every purdent length. But it should neither injure her tender health, cause neglect of family duties, nor impair her softer graces. Nothing could exempt her from guiding the home.[27]

The stigma which a few pedants gave all female learning forced the mental culturists to draw up a code of behavior for women. It was brief but to the point. A woman with a cultivated mind was not ostentatious or flippant in manner, or conceited among people. She had less repartee in her expression. In fact, she was cautious in displaying her good sense and learning before men. If someone asked her opinion, she gave a very discreet and niggardly answer. By these exhortations, the supporters of mental culture hoped to avoid "literati in

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[26]Franklin, p. 21; Webster, p. 41; The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 232; Chapone, II, 193; James Fordyce, The Character and Conduct of The Female Sex and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women (1st American ed.; Boston, 1781), p. 39, in EAI no. 19408; Adams, p. 218.

[27]The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 136-137, 232; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 121, 167-168; Gisborne, pp. 199-200.

petticoats."[28]

Another issue faced mental culture. Members of both sexes accused man of conscienciously promoting the desire to please and the love of dress to keep woman ignorant and docile. One author claimed the ridiculous and expensive female fashions were entirely the invention of gentlemen who wished to distract the ladies from improving their minds in order to have more arbitrary authority over them. Another said women complained that their education in vanity and coquetry made them satisfied with trifles and content with masculine rule. Furthermore, men opposed female learning beyond household economy on the grounds it made women conceited, impertinent companions, and indifferent to family affairs.[29]

The mental culturists readily admitted a few women neglected their domestic duties by prolonged study, but the exception should not confine all females to the narrow limits of the nursery, the kitchen, and the confectionary. Feminine irresponsibility sprang more from an exorbitant love of diversion, mistaken notions about gallantry, lack of fortified reason, and the absence of solid principles. It was false opinions and the resulting loose sentiments which caused woman to neglect the home. It was illogical, said Benjamin Rush to believe an

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[28]Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., II, 92-93; More, pp. 57-58; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 94, 232; Burton, p. 97; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 177; Boudier de Villemert, p. 18.

[29]Rush, p. 25; Rousseau, p. 327; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, p. 170; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 136, 137.

ignorant woman made a better wife.[30]

Mental culturists like Enos Hitchcock, resurrected Rousseau's argument to refute the supposed insidious male conspiracy to keep woman domestic. Female education was under the direction of the mothers, and men had nothing to do with it, he wrote. They taught them the long toilet, and the airs, graces, and arts which subjugated men. It was in their power to make their daughters whatever they wanted.[31] Furthermore, in the United States, the land of liberty, as little despotism was exercised over the mind of woman as over their persons. They had opportunity for self-study every day. What man had such an opportunity? It was the fault of women, not of men, if they had unimproved minds. The women who complained of being doomed to a state of dark and gloomy ignorance by the tyranny of men complained of an evil which did not exist.[32]

Mothers also believed that reading dulled the luster in their daughters' eyes and that men preferred physical beauty, charm, and accomplishment to learning. Others asserted women lacked a zeal for learning.[33]

The most potent argument against these objections was the anticipated merits of mental culture, which its advocates believed

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[30]The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 137, 301; Rush, p. 25. See also Burton, p. 88; Smith, II, 707-708.

[31]Hitchcock, Memoirs . . ., I, 25. See also Rousseau, p. 327; Jefferson, XII, 90.

[32]More, p. 9; Burton, p. 96.

[33]Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 170-184.

undesirable consequences. It promised to end many of the evils of domestic and accomplished education by joining merit with the graces and restraining the unwarranted passions of woman. She would be a fit companion for persons of reason. The woman who had an enriched understanding would be less dependent on external amusements and empty gratifications. She would abhor corrupting activities such as card playing, flirting, drinking, and gadding about, and she would not stoop to feminine wiles to entertain people or to get reasonable things from her husband. Mental culture would keep her from avarice, ambition, vanity, scandal, and ostentation.[34]

Mental culture would produce those women who raised heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, wrote John Adams, second President of the United States.[35] Their behavior was the most infallible barometer of the morality, virtue, and spirit of a nation. When the women of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Dutch lost their modesty and domestic virtues, he explained, these nations lost their public virtue and republican principles, habits, and government. Should American women follow their example, havoc would occur in the United States. The judges, governors, ministers, and representatives would buy their offices from prostitutes and sell their judgments, decrees, and decisions for reimbursement or to gain the smiles of other notorious females.[36]

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[34]The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 183; Burton, pp. 87-88; Gisborne, pp. 26-27; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 192-198.

[35]Adams, p. 213.

[36]Charles Francis Adams, The Works of John Adams (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1851), III, 171.

Intelligent women would lay the foundation for national morality in the private family by keeping their sons from loose principles and licentious habits. No child could form any sense of sacred obligation if he knew from earliest infancy his mother lived in infidelity and his father, also.[37]

The unhappiness and injustice of being too dependent on man would be reduced to a minimum. Wives picked quarrels with their husbands, explained one woman, because of what they hoped from them, not from what they thought their husbands owed them. They would find solace for this disappointment in a well stocked mind instead of loosing their wrath on society and in the home. They would be perfect companions, accomplished mothers, and constant friends.[38]

Conclusion

By the end of the eighteenth century, a growing number of people found the dominant modes of female education to be defective. This mood which encouraged a new look at what was the best training for woman resulted in mental culture. Simply defined, it meant educating the whole person. It was not a complete break with the past, for it included domestic and accomplished training and respected the innate nature of woman. The bulk of mental culture would be gained by individual efforts in daily reading and meditation.

This natural education trained woman to think, love, and will,

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[37] Ibid., III, 171-172; John Adams, pp. 213, 218.

[38] The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 202; Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, pp. 183, 192, 201.

not to be ignorant, or confined to the house or the gaming room. It opposed making her the servant, slave, or automaton of man. Instead, it respected her as the helpmate and reasonable companion of man.

The rethinking of the education of woman was a prelude to the private woman's colleges of the next century. Some modifications of mental culture made possible co-education by mid-nineteenth century.

PART II

THE LIBERAL VIEW OF WOMAN

CHAPTER IX

THE ENVIRONMENTALLY-SHAPED NATURE OF WOMAN

Society Founded on the Nature of Human Beings

In the 1790's, the first indications of a new ferment over the nature of woman appeared in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft. The wisest organization of society, she said, drew its inspiration and structure from the nature of human beings. Culture, laws, behavior, social relationships, and institutions derived their essence from it. The truthfulness of this idea struck every thinking person so forcefully that it looked like presumption to offer proof, she continued. Yet when people viewed themselves as totally depraved at birth and thereafter, they adopted safeguards to protect themselves from the potential dangers of that depravity. On the other hand, a belief in the essential goodness of man led to a freer society. From the former belief in total depravity sprang an authoritarian society; from the opposite came a society based more upon individual responsibility than upon institutional direction.[1]

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[1]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), p. 16; Lydia Maria Child, Letters from New York (1st series, 2d ed.; New York: C. S. Francis and Co., 1844), p. 250.

One fundamental question had to be answered about the nature of human beings. Was human nature innately determined or was it shaped by the environment? The answer to this question held the key to a more liberal ideology about woman.

The personal experiences, studies, and thinking of Mary Wollstonecraft and those who followed in her footprints led to the conviction that the theory of depravity maligned the nature of human beings. In its place, they substituted the environmental theory which, for them, explained the individual differences found in society, classes, and the sexes.

Environmentalism, then, became the pillar-idea of the liberal but not necessarily of the more extreme elements of the developing woman's movement. The latter vigorously sponsored a modified innatism in the form of the superiority of woman. The former held solidly to their keystone. Without it, the more advanced thought about equality of the sexes would have floundered upon contradictions and absurdities, hence lack a logical scheme to discredit the conclusions and the evidence of the innatists.

Mary Wollstonecraft and those who followed her took this pillar-idea from the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century which in turn had taken it from John Locke. He laid the foundation upon which subsequent thinkers added an elaborate superstructure. The woman's movement emerged as part of this general ferment of ideas.

Environmentalism Defined and Explained

What came to be known as environmentalism first started as a

theory of knowledge. All knowledge, this theory said, originated in either sensation or reflection, or both.[2] Sensation came from outside a person and activated his senses--sight, taste, hearing, feeling, and smelling--and the nerves carried this sense-information to the brain. Where nothing operated on the senses, said Frances Wright, nothing could be known; in the absence of the primary sensations or elementary facts, no knowledge existed. The first ideas or marks upon the mind came from experience with things outside the person. Most of the ideas he would ever have came from this chaotic mass of sensations.[3]

In making sense of the heap of sensations, the reflection or internal sense produced another set of ideas which could not be received from external objects. These originated wholly within a person and were as distinct as those received externally. The reflection of the mind on its own operations produced ideas like perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, and willing.[4]

Likewise, the passions accompanied the operations of the mind, for satisfaction or uneasiness were natural products arising from thought. They associated pleasure and pain with the ideas and impressions within the mind and gave each person a particular moral

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[2]John Locke, The Works of John Locke (3d ed.; London: Arthur Bettesworth, 1727), I, 32.

[3]Frances Wright, Course of Popular Lectures as Delivered by Frances Wright (2d ed.; New York: Published at the Office of The Free Enquirer, 1829), pp. 88, 22, 25; Locke, I, 32, 38-39. William Godwin influenced a number of the American reformers. See his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness, ed. F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), I, 24-95.

[4]Locke, I, 32.

temperament. By this means each person arrived at what was right and what was wrong.

Thus the human intellect had the capacity to receive impressions from the outside world via the senses and by reflection on the sense-data. Sensation and reflection were man's tools to discover the world "without" and "within." With these he constructed all the notions he would naturally have while in the world. Even in sublime thoughts and remote speculations, claimed the environmentalist, the mind never stirred beyond the ideas which sensation and reflection offered for its contemplation. All human ideas, then, whether simple or complex, took root in sense and mental experience, and the disposition developed concomitantly with the activities of the mind.[5]

The environmental theory of knowledge logically implied that the human mind at birth resembled a blank sheet of white paper or was void of all impressions, marks, or ideas. Like virgin soil, it responded readily to the seeds planted in it. This could be seen, said Locke, if one followed a child from birth and observed the alterations made by time. The senses at first poured ideas and images into his anxiously receptive, but empty cabinet. As the mind gradually grew familiar with some of the sense-ideas, they were lodged in the memory. As more and more were retained, the mind became increasingly aware of the outside world and itself. Then it could be said that the child "knew" the object. In other words, the mind did not think until the senses began to function, and only with the passage of time did some objects become

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[5]Wright, pp. 22-26, 30, 88; Locke, I, 33.

familiar and make permanent impressions on the mind. Thus, by degrees, the child retained and distinguished between the various ideas conveyed to it by the senses--its parents from strangers, the ball from the rattle, the dog from the cat.

Eventually the faculties matured which compared and contrasted, criticized and evaluated, reasoned and abstracted ideas. They incessantly related and organized each new sensation to those already classified and structured. With these the mind advanced from the simple sense-facts to the most abstract ideas of mankind.[6]

Locke also questioned the belief that the mind possessed innate ideas and principles at birth. He claimed the absence of knowledge in the mind prior to receiving data from the senses invalidated the theory of innate ideas and principles. Little did he know his statement would start a battle of ideas between the environmentalists and the innatists which would continue into the twentieth century.

What some people called innate ideas were really rooted in sensation, he explained. Because general ideas, the acquisition of words, and the use of reason usually developed simultaneously, some people mistook these as inbred knowledge in an infant. They misunderstood the eager receptivity of his mind and its rapidly developing ability to express simple facts and a few primary combinations of facts. Very early knowledge proved to be acquired from those things around the baby which made the most frequent impressions on his senses. As soon as he was able to perceive and retain ideas, his mind

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[6]Locke, I, 33, 34, 38.

discovered that some things differed and some agreed. Thus he reasoned long before he had the use of words. Certainly a child could distinguish between sweet and bitter, hot and cold, fresh and sour before it could speak. After the senses let in particular ideas and the mind developed an habitual association of ideas through the repetition of the sensations, specific names were given to them. The mind continued to abstract the ideas and later learned the use of general names. For the environmentalist, the long road from the first ideas and utterances to general ideas or abstract language depended on the environmental stimuli rather than any innateness.[7]

Many people believed the idea of God and certain moral principles were common knowledge to all people, hence innate universal laws. Did any moral rule exist, asked Locke, which all men fully understood? Or, for which they did not need an explanation in order to obey it? No such principle existed! If it did, any demand for a reason would be perfectly absurd, for each man would have the "where-fores" and "whys" written in his mind. For example, outlaws who practiced justice and morality toward each other did not believe that such rules of action applied to other people, especially their victims. And numerous instances showed they even failed to practice this morality towards each other. Moral convictions were crystalized from reflection on the environment, not innately received.[8]

It could hardly be expected that human beings would have an

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[7] Ibid., I, 4-5, 6-8.

[8] Ibid., I, 12, 14, 24-28.

innate idea of God without universal moral principles implanted in their minds. Contrariwise, how could such moral principles exist in a mind which had no inborn notion of God? Ancient history and recent discoveries in the dark parts of the earth, said Locke, proved many people had existed without a notion of a god; he had not appeared until a name was invented for him. The idea of a deity was no more a natural impression upon the mind than the names of fire, sun, heat, or number proved the ideas for which they stood were innate. Since men grew up with the words of the common language of their environs, they could scarcely avoid having some notion of those things for which the words stood, he explained. A little serious reflection on the plain evidence of the extraordinary wisdom and power necessary to create the world would suggest a greater power than man. Since reflection revealed God, there was no need for this knowledge to be innate.[9]

Systems of morality and religion also had their beginnings in sensation and reflection rather than in authoritarian revelations and its demand for blind faith. True moral and religious principles consisted of facts systematized from sense-materials received by the mind. Only when rules of faith were traced to these original beginnings could their validity be established. For example, how a man arrived at the idea of God laid the basis of religion. He who gained such through observing nature could honestly question the claims of religious leaders and institutions which set themselves up as the sole possessors of the true knowledge of God and the only means of communication with

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[9]Ibid., I, 22-23, 24-28.

Him. He could justly evaluate whether procedural salvation and revealed religions had a basis in observable phenomena or were imaginative creations of some men desiring political, economic, and social gain. A legal system which based punishment on rank, wealth, and class could be evaluated similarly. A person would readily see the injustice of a system which allowed the aristocrat to demonstrate he could read and write in order to escape the death penalty while the uneducated commoner was at the mercy of the court.

The rejection of innate ideas and principles strongly suggested that human beings were born without knowledge although they might have differing capacities. No person or social class came into life with mental disabilities deliberately placed there by a deity. The difference between the soldier and the statesman, the noble and the peasant, the savage and the gentleman, and the man and the woman could be traced directly to the unequal experiences and opportunities of each. A person's knowledge or accumulation of facts corresponded exactly to the largeness of his sphere of observation and the carefulness of his investigation within that sphere.[10]

The more the environmentalist exalted man as the discoverer of knowledge, the more he questioned the purposes of human institutions. Why did the institutions of education, religion, law, land, and society

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[10]Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin, a Dialogue (a type-facsimile reprint of the 1st edition printed in 1798, New Haven: Carl & Margaret Rollins, 1935), p. 21; Frances Wright Darusmont, Course of Popular Lectures, Historical and Political (Philadelphia: Published by the author, 1836), II, 34; Wright, pp. 22, 61, 122; Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Tribune Press, 1845), p. 8.

give certain advantages and privileges to one class which they denied to the others? he asked. Why did certain classes have heavier obligations to certain institutions than did others? Why were certain offices in government, the army, and the church reserved for specific families? Why were the doors of institutions of higher learning, the practice of law, the ownership of land, the social mobility closed to certain levels of society?

After pondering these problems, he tended to discard the dominant societal theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for one based on environmentalism. The proposed relationship of human beings--man to man, man to woman--rested on the inalienable rights of life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness. It carried with it the seeds of equality before the law, in education, and of opportunities. As the eighteenth century matured, the conviction spread to more and more people that their environment denied them power, wealth, respectability, and prevented their escape from depressing conditions. The solution seemed to lie in altering institutions, either peacefully or violently, to give people access to the luxuries and enjoyments of life which had, heretofore, been enjoyed by the few. Among the consequences were the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and a variety of reform movements aimed at changing the environment.

The assumption that changes in the environment would automatically change human behavior led to the idea of progress or the eradication of evil through a conscientious improvement of the total environment. A perfect society or a secular millenialism was the anticipated result.

Assault on Innate Sexual Nature of Woman

As the explicit and implicit ideas in the environmental theory of knowledge wrought dissatisfaction in politics, religion, economics, and society, a small group of thinkers, in a less dramatic way, applied them to women. By 1800 they had raised a number of questions. If the environment equally shaped the nature of both sexes, why did woman have a different character from man? Did woman have a sexual nature? Was femininity acquired from the environment? Did sex have any influence upon the mind and body regardless of the environment? Was her smaller physique inherited or acquired? Was her mind curtailed by her supposed superior sensibility? Could a just division of duties and responsibilities be made between the sexes other than along reproductive lines? What would changes in the environment do to her purpose, religion, and education? What then would be the true relationship of the sexes in society? In other words, what were the implications of environmentalism for woman?

The re-examination of the nature of woman acknowledged that the concept of a sexual nature had been the decisive factor in the present societal arrangement. How well had it worked? What were its fruits? asked the environmentalists. In answering these questions, they launched an attack on the central principle of the innatist--the innate sexual essence of woman.[11] In the dissection of this popular notion, they

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[11] *passim* in Wollstonecraft; Brown; William Dunlap, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown, Together with Selections from the Rarest of his Printed Works, from his Original Letters, and from his Manuscripts before Unpublished* (Philadelphia: James P. Parker, 1815, on microfilm, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilm, Inc., 1963); Lydia Maria

emphatically stressed its evil consequences, as good propagandists would do, before they investigated the source of the "false" idea of femininity and masculinity.

The sexual nature of woman created a natural duality in life--things reserved for woman and those for man, things forbidden to woman and those taboo to man. There was woman's work and man's work, her virtue and his virtue, her way of doing things and his, her education and worship and his. She was dependent, weak-minded, and sensitive while he was independent, strong-minded, and rational. The belief also separated mankind into human beings and females. As "woman" instead of a human creature, she was closer to brute creation, hence animalistic. Man believed her sensuality should be accentuated instead of her understanding. In the end, said the environmentalists, woman either despised a trained mind or confused it with well cultivated instincts. Man allowed her enough reflection to be an alluring mistress to inspire carnal love; after all, pleasure was the business of her life. This love of pleasure, said Wollstonecraft, caused woman to either resign or not assume her God-given prerogatives. Furthermore, people considered the affectionate wife who sought respect by her virtues an aberration of nature, an out-and-out violation of natural feminine animalism. As the

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Child, Brief History of the Condition of Women in Various Ages and Nations (rev. and cor. 5th ed.; New York, 1845); Sarah M. Grimke, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838); Wright; Darusmont; Margaret Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men. Woman versus Women," The Dial, IV (July 1843), 1-47; Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century. These are representative books which recognized the pervasiveness of the belief in the innate sexual nature of woman. They are likewise representative of the books which assaulted the belief in an innate sexual nature of woman.

slave of opinion and fashion, wrote the environmentalists, her cramped understanding revelled in a degraded mental and physical dependence on man.

Morality was subverted by giving it a sex. Chained by the double standard to sensibility, woman bargained for a home, children, and sustenance much as the common prostitute bartered for money. The insistence on one standard for woman and another for man made virtue a relative idea, not one derived from divine law. And it would remain relative as long as society allowed man a thousand irregularities which it forbade woman. What more could one expect of a woman, said the environmentalist, than a strenuous attempt to preserve her reputation before her virtue.

The sexual nature idea was detrimental in another way. Woman, kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence, accepted the caprices, follies and vices of her times without question. Preoccupied with manners, family name, propriety, and prescription, she developed an artificial character which was ever zealous about secondary things but seldom bothered by unperformed responsibilities. This gentle, domestic brute focused on the muck below with little or no thought about the glories above. In the end, the sexual nature idea degraded the female half of the species by making her always conscious of being a woman, by sacrificing her solid virtues to sensuality, and by throwing her out of a useful station in life. She remained an overgrown child with a neglected understanding.[12]

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[12]Wollstonecraft, pp. 3, 10-11, 23, 26-28, 32, 22, 35, 40, 41.

What was the origin of such a specious idea which produced such evil consequences? asked the environmentalists. How did the illusion arise which expected each sex to walk in different paths? Why did each act and think in different ways? Why did one set of manners, proprieties, and habits belong to woman and another to man? If the sexual nature did not exist, why did each sex live their lives in the shadow of this belief? Why were penalties meted out to the sex which intruded on the privileges and behavior of the other? What was the source of this idea?

The answer was simple, claimed the environmentalists. Parents placed their daughter in an environment different from their son. It inculcated feminine morality, mentality, and character, and she learned to correlate her behavior with this dissimilarity. The sooner boys and girls were forced into divergent paths, explained Mary Wollstonecraft, the quicker the artificial sexual nature appeared. They would play harmlessly together if a sex-oriented environment did not inflict the distinction of sex long before nature made them aware of any physical differences.[13]

The environmentalist was even more specific about how this forced set of experiences affected woman's mind. The mind reflected on

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45, 50, 57, 59, 60-64, 67, 97, 109, 134, 144; Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 10-12, 17, 20, 23; Brown, pp. 15, 16, 18, 23, 76, 77; The Female Character Vindicated, or An Answer to the Scurrilous Invectives of Fashionable Gentlemen (Philadelphia: Thomas Bradford, 1795), pp. 6-12, in EAI no. 28664; Child, Brief History . . ., passim, vol. II; Grimke, pp. 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 22-24, 33, 39, 50, 54, 61-62, 74-83, 84-97; Wright, pp. 9, 39, 52, 55.

[13]Wollstonecraft, p. 48.

the raw material which came into it and from this operation produced an "association of ideas." As this became habitual, a definite impression was given to the character and a cast to the mind which usually remained throughout life. Hence her special environment made her a woman long before infancy ended.[14]

These habitual impressions banefully worked the idea of a sexual nature into every phase of woman's life. As a small girl, she could be nothing other than feminine who was taught to play house, to dress and undress dolls, to sit still, to listen to the foolish chat of weak nurses, and to attend her mother's long toilet.[15] It was natural to imitate the actions and conversations of her mother, aunt and cousin and to amuse herself with her doll, a lifeless baby. From these she graduated to the art of how to please by assiduously observing propriety and personal adornment. This early corruption was reinforced by the answers she had to give religious leaders or her elders about her duties. An informal education from society endorsed coquetry and cunning. By the age of ten or eleven and often much sooner, wrote Wollstonecraft, a young girl began to flirt and talk, unreproved, of establishing herself in society by marriage. She learned from her mother that a little cunning knowledge, mild temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to propriety obtained the protection of a man. If combined with beauty, everything else would be unessential

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[14] Ibid., pp. 126-127.

[15] Ibid., pp. 127, 90, 47.

for at least twenty years of her life.[16]

After marriage, the above cruel association of ideas received new strength. By exciting and gratifying the senses and pride of her husband, she gained power over him. Her fate became inescapable. False notions of beauty and delicacy had stunted her limbs and produced sickliness, and her mind lacked the vigor to throw off her artificial character. It had been employed only in an indiscriminate acceptance rather than a critical examination of the first associations forced on her by her environment.[17] Thus everything twisted the cruel association of ideas into a dreadful labyrinth.

The social environment also encouraged femininity, explained the environmentalist. Opposite ideas, maxims, and pursuits produced a separate system of morality for her. She counterfeited indifference and aversion of the sentiments, while the man used adulation, affected humility, and a disproportion of ardor. After wedlock, she could not expostulate or rebel against her husband but relied on tears, blandishments and sex to prevail in all contests; appeals to justice and reason were taboo. If she hoped to receive the approval of the world, she had to smile with perseverance on her oppressor while maintaining, like a "dog," a faithful attachment to her master which no caprice of cruelty could estrange.[18] Thus the female reflected the peculiar association

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[16]Ibid., pp. 23, 47, 90; Emmeline Stuart Wortley, Travels in the United States During 1849 and 1850 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851), p. 141 found the same behavior in 1849 and 1850.

[17]Wollstonecraft, pp. 127, 128.

[18]Brown, pp. 41, 42.

of ideas forced into her mind.[19]

If the belief in a sexual nature originated in a selective environment for the female, why did the innatists fail to see the error of their belief? The environmentalists accused them of mistaking symptoms for causes, of arguing from consequences to erroneous causes without verifying the steps between. Some examples of this mode of reasoning clarified the accusation. Because women paid minute attention to their faces, hair, and beauty, it was evident they had an innate love of dress, comb, and makeup. Their incessant cultivation of personal beauty and artificialities to please man proved their desire to please was inborn. Because a needle and thread hypnotized them, it had to be in their blood. Because females did not talk about politics, war, business, or industry as did the males, it was evident they had a natural aversion to such objects. Because they had sewed, cooked, washed, borne children, and cleaned house from time immemorial, it was their proper sphere. They behaved modestly, discretely, and anxiously observed etiquette because Providence made them this way. Otherwise, they would not behave thusly. It was clear to the innatist that observation of woman's conduct and conversation clearly showed the marked impression which nature had given her. By reasoning from symptoms rather than causes, the innatists failed to see the origin of the artificially created nature of woman and its resultant evils, said the environmentalist.

The Environmentally-Shaped Nature of Woman

After discarding the sexual nature concept, the environmentalists

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[19] Ibid., pp. 76-77; Wollstonecraft, p. 28.

turned to their view of woman. Every person born, they said, partook of the same ductile human nature.[20] The environment forced open the door of each person's development and by its uneven impressions created all the possible shades of personality. No two people could be exactly alike after contact with the external world. How far and how swiftly their careers proceeded in life could be inferred from a knowledge of their individual circumstances.[21] Likewise the opinions, thoughts, and habits of each were improved or degraded, animated or silenced by precisely the same things.[22]

The progressive nature of each individual made him wise in proportion to the number of his accurately observed and reasoned ideas. A wider variety of experiences, then, differentiated the elderly person from the youth or the traveler from the farmer. These effects were no less incident to one sex than to the other, wrote the environmentalist.[23] A girl whose spirits had not been broken by confinement and false shame would always be a romp and would never be excited by a doll.[24]

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[20]Brown, p. 55; Wollstonecraft, p. 5; /Judith Sargent Stevens Murray/, The Gleaner (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1798), III, 196, in EAI no. 34162; Grimke, pp. 7, 117; Margaret Fuller, The Writings of Margaret Fuller, ed. Mason Wade (New York: Viking Press, 1941), pp. 211-212. For a clear statement by the conservatives, see John W. Nevin, "Woman's Rights," The American Review (October 1848), pp. 367-381, and here and there in Godey's Lady's Magazine; /Anna Brownell/ Jameson, Legends of the Madonna as Represented in the Fine Arts (4th ed.; London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1867), pp. xvii-xx, xxxviii-xli. See also Gleason's Pictorial (July 2, 1853), p. 14.

[21]Dunlap, pp. 84-85.

[22]Murray, III, 194.

[23]Dunlap, p. 85.

[24]Wollstonecraft, p. 48.

However trivial an item might be in the environment, it still had some influence on a person. Sex, for example, had some influence on human beings, but it had far less than other incidents common to both sexes. The person who resided in the mountains differed from the one who lived on the plains. Subterranean darkness of an enclosed mountain valley suggested quite different ideas to people from a land of promontories, waterfalls, or roaring rapids. Geographical features gave the same ideas to men or women regardless of sex. The age, locality, and associates of a person dwarfed the significance of sex.[25] Any other view of this purely physical item violated reason and morality, said Sarah Grimke in 1838, an outspoken advocate of environmentalism. To believe the sex of the body ruled over and determined the rights and responsibilities of the moral and immortal natures blasphemed God. It utterly broke up the relationship of the animal and moral natures allowing the former to usurp rule over the latter.[26]

As further proof one environmentalist compared women with military men. Like females, soldiers received similar preparation before they entered the theater of the world. Both matured with insufficient knowledge, hence the consequences were similar! They paid particular attention to their persons, haunted dances and crowded rooms, sought adventures, and loved to use ridicule. Gallantry preoccupied their every thought, and in their assiduous efforts to please, they practiced the minor virtues with such punctilious politeness that it

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[25]Dunlap, p. 85.

[26]Brown, p. 67; Grimke, p. 117.

inflamed all their capacities.[27] Both snatched a little superficial knowledge from the muddled stream of conversation as they mingled in society. Each confused these manners and customs of the world with a knowledge and understanding of the human heart. Neither group possessed many resolute individuals with vigorous intellectual faculties. The cause was the same: their training gave them similar characters. Where, then, was the sexual difference when the environment had been the same? asked Mary Wollstonecraft.[28]

Women and soldiers shared the same great misfortune of acquiring manners before morals and knowledge before wisdom. Satisfied with their perverted nature, they accepted credulity for faith and obedience for a battle cry. Their limited minds performed like an "instinctive glance" which caught portions and made decisions with respect to manners but failed when opinions or arguments were seriously analyzed. The only difference between the two arose from the superior liberty of the soldier to see more of life. Although he retained a rank superior to women, sadonically wrote Wollstonecraft, it was difficult to determine the reason for this pre-eminence.[29]

If the contention of environmentalism be true, why were females conspicuously absent among the rulers of states and the instructors of mankind? Why have there been no female Plato, Socrates, Newton, Locke, or Jefferson? True, women were not such great figures, said the

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[27]Wollstonecraft, p. 28.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., pp. 27-28.

environmentalists, nor were they helots, shoemakers, farmers, or carpenters. They have seldom been metaphysicians, lawgivers, professors of great learning, physicists, or chemists because of their occupations. It could not be otherwise. The unalterable constitution of human nature prevented a person from reading who had never learned an alphabet or from writing who had never used a pen or pencil. Women were generally superficial and ignorant because they were cooks and seamstresses. As a Laplander could not read or write Greek without instruction, neither could woman be wise or skillful in business or politics without suitable opportunities. She stood a better chance of becoming an astronomer by using a telescope instead of eternally threading the needle or snapping the scissors. Making a stew, baking bread, carving a turkey, or shopping did not facilitate the acquisition of literary or scientific knowledge. How could one expect prodigious achievements from the woman who read a novel or comedy once a month or chanted a few moments each day to her piano? One author sternly asserted that men of talent and genius came from a class inaccessible to women and that those females who acted rationally had accidentally escaped the traditional limitations places on females. Their occupational environment, then, withheld that stimulation to study which no person brought into the world but owed to favorable circumstances.[30]

In the nineteenth century Margaret Fuller added the philosophical insight of transcendentalism to the investigation of the nature of woman. She observed human nature to be equal before the environment and that

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[30]Brown, pp. 19, 22-24, 48-49, 85.

individual characteristics prevailed over any uniform trait in either sex. While human beings exhibited a variety of personalities or characters, each person, regardless of sex, seemed to have a distinctive cast. She pondered as to why it was more peculiar to the individual than the sex.

Human nature, she said, placed mankind in two worlds, the animal beneath and the intellectual and spiritual above. This bifurcation made each person subject to the laws of nature and those of immortality. The earth formed his school; thought allowed him to interpret nature and aspire to God. However, only a fraction of this could be achieved in a lifetime. The sum of the lives of all men, or Man taken as a whole, she explained, revealed the purpose of life. This entity--Man--possessed one body and soul which suffered throughout when the least member was injured; hence, mankind could never be perfectly happy or virtuous while any of its members were otherwise.[31]

From the creation the growth of mankind followed the radical dualism of energy, power, and intellect--love, harmony, and beauty. The former represented the animal side of human nature or the "masculine" while the latter represented the spiritual side or the "feminine."[32]

Fuller found that neither side of the dichotomy appeared in pure form in either sex, but only in preponderance. Many men had existed with far more beauty than power and many women to the contrary. The use of "it seems" revealed Fuller's doubt about any ideal system

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[31]Fuller, Writings, p. 211.

[32]Ibid., p. 212.

which would make woman the sole possessor of harmony, beauty, and love and man of energy, power, and intellect. Although the ideal might "seem to be" the case, the opposite was true, she said. Nature never ordered feminine harmony, beauty, and love to be incarnated pure in any form or masculine energy, power, and intellect to have complete autonomy. Although the personages "male" and "female" might symbolize the opposites of the great radical dualism, no wholly masculine man or purely feminine woman had ever existed. In fact, each perpetually passed into the other as fluid hardened to solid and as solid rushed to fluid. Nature never established absolute masculinity or femininity, said Fuller.[33]

Unfortunately, the two sides of human nature had failed to develop equally in mankind as a whole or in the individual, she said. Had this happened, they would have corresponded to and fulfilled each other. Instead, they answered each other now and then. If a persistent consonance existed, it could only be seen over long periods of history, for the animal had generally over-powered the soul of mankind and the individual.[34] Why had the mundane overcome the transcendent? What separated energy from harmony, power from beauty, intellect from love? What caused aggression and hatred to supplant morality?

Of the two parts of human nature, said Fuller, Man came first in history. The development of energy before harmony, power before beauty,

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[33]Ibid.; Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 43. Her idea penetrated the thought of one innatist who discretely avoided its logical consequences. See Joseph Rodes Buchanan, Outlines of Lectures on the Neurological System of Anthropology (Cincinnati: Printed at the Office of Buchanan's Journal of Man, 1854), p. 380.

[34]Fuller, Writings, p. 212.

and intellect before love made Man the elder, the guardian and teacher of harmony, beauty, and love. But energy, power, and intellect misunderstood and abused their advantages. They became the temporal master instead of the spiritual sire, the prison keeper instead of the parent, and the tyrant instead of the teacher of their sister.[35]

Upon mankind came the punishment. The "feminine" was educated more and more as a servant, then as a peasant, and finally as a serf. The "masculine" found itself a king without a queen--wild energy without the rationalizing influence of balance--raw power without the taming influence of form--and cold intellect without the warming influence of affection. The uneven nature of the offspring of this unequal union made mankind appear more and more as the sons of the handmaid instead of the queen. At last ignorance, passion, jealousy, envy, and hatred set man against man until the milder aspects of human nature were eclipsed and even banished for a time.

When mankind grew wiser, it realized the feminine traits could raise the human race from degradation as the pure instincts of Woman saved the infant Moses from the Nile River.[36] As the aggressive qualities came to respect their counterparts, kindness, justice, benevolence, and compassion appeared. Still masculine habit and will was so corrupted it failed to fully see that the feminine was half himself, and its interests were identical with his. This fact also escaped Man: the law of their common being declared that neither could reach their true

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[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

proportions while the other remained in ignorance and inactivity. This sporadic coordination of truth and justice left the repugnant traits dominant even in 1844, stated Fuller. The mutual improvement of both sexes demanded the "masculine" and "feminine" tendencies be given equal influence on each other.[37] But custom which taught one sex to cultivate the opposite traits of the other stifled the growth of the world. In other words, certain ideas and principles had become associated with one sex more than with the other: bravery, courage, and war-like qualities belonged to men, softness, modesty, docility, and gentleness to women.

However, the truth of the matter required each person to develop the "masculine" and "feminine" traits if he hoped to become perfect. The tools of inspiration and genius necessary to improve the soul had been liberally distributed to each individual. Nothing belonged solely to woman or to man, she said. The poet or artist whether male or female especially shared and needed the "feminine principle." Only when the sexes realized that all talents, abilities, and capacities must be perfected, would they cease to say that certain traits belonged only to woman and others only to man.[38]

Margaret Fuller described mid-nineteenth century America as on the threshold of producing a clearer vision of the true nature of human beings, one in which woman and man would be as brother and sister to each other; the columns of one porch and the priests of one faith. She

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[37] Ibid., p. 213.

[38] Ibid.

concluded with the prophecy that if woman was allowed to fully develop her two-dimensional human nature, a female Newton and a male Syren would presently appear.[39]

Should a person find either the innate sexual or the environmentally molded nature unacceptable, what other choices were there? asked Wollstonecraft. First, a woman could be considered as suspended by destiny in a position between mankind and the animals which denied both the unerring instinct of the brutes and the reason of man to guide her life. Being the sensuous tools of man, women would be shut out of society if they attempted to gain the respect given to man.[40] Second, the few women who had freed themselves from the galling yoke of male sovereignty could be explained by the ingenious conjecture respecting Newton. It said he was probably from a superior order of the great chain of being, accidentally caged in a human body. Then the few extraordinary women were male spirits confined by mistake in female frames. The existence of male and female spirits would easily account for the differences between men and women. However, the strenuous objections to sexed souls made such an explanation unacceptable. Then, too, the problem of why a male soul failed to get the right body remained unanswered.

Third, the inferiority of woman could be caused by the different size and strength of the organs of the body. In so many words, the sexes would appear to be physically equal but the more enthusiasm or

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[39]Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 44.

[40]Wollstonecraft, p. 39.

stimulation given the organs of man would separate him from woman. Hence, he thought with more rapidity, depth, and breadth and had more stamina, strength, and agility. In short, she received enough of the "heavenly fire" to walk, but he had enough to run![41]

Conclusion

The environmentalist began his discussion of the nature of woman with the proposition that the view people had of human nature influenced all aspects of a nation. This was especially true of post-revolutionary America where the belief in an innate sexual nature for woman had prescribed all aspects of her life. The evil consequences of such a belief caused the environmentalist to ponder its origin. He discovered femininity resulted from placing females in a separate and distinct environment from males. Here the continual repetition of the specially controlled early experiences established an habitual association of ideas which molded her totality for life.

The inadequacy of the older view prompted the environmentalist to formulate his own idea. For him woman had a human instead of a sexual nature as evidenced by the same propensities of the sexes when they matured in similar circumstances. This could be seen in the similarity of women and soldiers and in the influence which employments had on the lives of individuals. In the case of females, they were dull and insipid because they had been cooks and seamstresses from the dawn of history.

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[41] Ibid.

Philosophically, human nature grew twofold: feminine and masculine. Regardless of sex, each person had to develop these two capacities of his nature. Only when mankind repudiated different virtues for each sex would it make progress towards perfection. Mid-nineteenth century America promised, so women thought, to synchronize energy with harmony, power with beauty, and intellect with love; to level the barriers separating the sexes.

With the idea of an innate sexual nature for woman shattered, at least to the satisfaction of the environmentalists, and with their own view of woman explained, they applied this new idea to the physique, mind, character, and purpose of woman. They also explained how and why she had lived in degradation and subordination to man. Her relationship to affairs outside the home also needed examining in the light of the environmental position. Out of this application developed the more liberal ideology of woman.

CHAPTER X

THE PHYSIQUE OF WOMAN OR THE FUNCTION OF SEX

Evils of the Sexed Physique

The medical facts, ideas, and speculations which filtered down to the popular mind, perpetuated the innatist's view of woman's physique well into the nineteenth century.[1] Against this ideological fortress the environmentalist threw his machines of war: he hurled the javelin of scorn at the buttresses, plagued the defenders with catapults of historical examples, showered the battlements with the arrows of subtlety, and scaled the precipitous walls with the ladder of reason. In vain did he mount the crest of the breastwork to wave the flag of victory, for he lacked the reserves to finish the struggle. Try as he might, he could muster few medical facts and spokesmen to back him.

The first stratagem used by the environmentalist in this struggle was to justify his declaration of war. This he found in an assessment of his opponent's emphasis on "artificial" notions of beauty and "false" conception of sensibility. The need to preserve and enhance her personal

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[1]Typical of such medical works were John William Draper, Human Physiology, Statical and Dynamical; or, the Conditions and Course of the Life of Man (2d ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1858), pp. 545-547; Samuel Jackson, The Principles of Medicine, Founded on the Structure and Functions of the Animal Organism (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1832), pp. 178-260; J. H. Rausse, The Water-Cure Applied to Every Known Disease, trans. C. H. Meeker (3d ed., enlarged; New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1851), p. 196.

beauty led to poor health practices, poor clothing, and a sedentary life which cramped a woman's limbs and faculties. While a boy grew robust in outdoor frolic, her constitution relaxed from quiet indoor life. A dependent body created a dependent mind which led to the complete subordination of woman. The time spent guarding against or enduring sickness also prevented her from being a good wife and mother.[2]

But the institutionalization of feminine debility had the worst effects, claimed the environmentalist. It made a robust, healthy body, which was allowed to be sick only now and then, masculine, and a frail one which was expected to appear sickly, if not actually ill, most of the time, feminine. The glory which genteel women saw in their physical subjection made them slaves to their bodies.

Since it was through sensibility that women obtained their power, the senses received their utmost homage. Unfortunately those who reveled in an uncommon estimation of their delicacy mistook a fastidious taste and a puny appetite for feminine perfection and acted accordingly. They neglected all the duties of life, boasted of little appetite, languished daily in self-complacency, and took tonics to revitalize their enervated bodies. By eating a light snack in the morning and afternoon, they sneered at food during mealtime. Both sexes accepted this as a sign of physical delicacy.[3]

Man's inferior view of the female body allowed him to consciously

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[2]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), pp. 47, 49.

[3]Ibid., pp. 49, 68.

take it for his favorite recreation. In the early years of life, he expected her healthy body to be a limp sacrifice to his libertine notions of beauty. Thus intoxicated and overpowered by adoration, the senses dragged the animal-woman down the golden path of illusion to the pigsty of sensuality, where her thoughts seldom strayed from her secret parts or beyond the triumph of the hour. The absence of the noble ambitions and passions gave her an ephemeral place in the hearts of men.[4] He inflicted an unspeakable injury upon woman, exclaimed Sarah Grimke, by glorifying her animal nature and depreciating her moral and intellectual being.[5] She had added to her own injury by an unqualified acceptance of this view. Mary Wollstonecraft wondered how many generations of freed women it would take before virtue would gain enough vigor to drive the scavanger passions from their usurped throne.[6]

A delicate physique left the female with all the characteristics of domestication:[7] shortsightedness, rusty mind, polluted ambitions, and abject slavery. And her stimulus-response reaction made her a convenient plaything for her husband.

Human Physique of Woman

Thus the environmentalist weighed the older view of woman's body in the balance and found it wanting. He believed woman could not be

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[4]Ibid., pp. 4, 6, 7, 50.

[5]Sarah M. Grimke, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), p. 23.

[6]Wollstonecraft, pp. 84, 67.

[7]Ibid., p. 70.

restored to her rightful heritage until the true nature of her physique had been explored and all the objections of the innatist answered.

Purpose of Sex

The emphasis which the innatist placed on the reproductive organs as the sire of the sexual physique forced the environmentalist to investigate exactly how much influence they had on the body. In other words, what was the purpose of sex?

Sex was merely a circumstance of animal existence to guarantee a continual succession of perishable individuals the same as in the animal world.[8] This was the main purpose of sex; it was not to give woman a sexual nature.

Rousseau's argument which had the sexual nature permeating the various organs and their functions until a female heart could easily be distinguished from that of a male met stiff resistence from the environmentalists. For them the organs of digestion, secretion, excretion, respiration, circulation, and sensation showed no differences in function in either sex. Both received nourishment in the same way. One diet, regimen, and mode of exercise existed which was best adapted to develop the human body and to maintain its full vitality. Likewise, neither sex was exempt from sickness or accident. Treatment varied with the malady instead of the sex. The sound woman and the sick man needed different

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[8]William Dunlap, The Life of Charles Brockden Brown, Together with Selections from the Rarest of his Printed Works, from his Original Letters, and from his Manuscripts before Unpublished (Philadelphia: James P. Parker, 1815, on microfilm, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1963), p. 79; Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin, a Dialogue (a type-facsimile reprint of the 1st edition printed in 1798; New Haven: Carl & Margaret Rollins, 1935), p. 67.

treatments, but they needed the same remedies if both suffered from the same ailment. The cure had to be suited to the individual who differed in regimen, disease and injury more than woman differed from man.[9]

This was clearly evident during infancy when both sexes required the same attendance, instruction, and nourishment. Neither required a different mode of care--or more or less of it--than the other. Then, asked one environmentalist, why should the limbs of the woman be made passive, weak, and soft while those of man were rendered active, vigorous, and firm? How could either sex hope to benefit from mistreatment of this kind?[10] Mankind was the loser, he answered. Healthy parents were needed to beget and bear vigorous children. As separate paths to the common goal (one for the female and one for the male) did not exist, so one sex did not find a healthy body of more value than did the other.[11] The same need for nursing, attention, and instruction obliterated the need for an innate sexual nature to differentiate the sexes. The bodily organs functioned and looked exactly alike, and disease did not affect one sex more than the other. In reality, they shared a kind of physical equality at birth, but man-made institutions perverted it.

That sex was something superimposed upon the nature of a creature entered at least one medical textbook by the 1840's. Charles D. Meigs, wrestling with why a child was born female instead of male, philosophized that the original germ was non-sexual but became male or

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[9]Dunlap, p. 83; see also Brown, pp. 67-68, 72-74; Grimke, p. 117.

[10]Dunlap, p. 84.

[11]Ibid.

female in an early stage of its embryonic life by some law of development unknown to man. He used the reproductive process of the honey bee as illustrative proof. By feeding each egg a different food, the bee produced what he wanted: a drone, a worker, or a female (queen bee). Hence the sexual nature was not original in either the bee or man. It was superimposed upon the animal or corporeal nature. Such a law, he suggested, could possibly be true for all animals, even for vegetables.[12]

Other evidence of a less sophisticated nature was available to practically everyone, wrote Meigs. If a person observed two children, one male and one female, who were born at the same hour, brought up at the same breast, of the same height and temperament, he could not tell their sex without reference to the pelvic area. They would play with the same toys and could be tickled with the same feather. They would resemble each other exactly in moral and physical attributes until each received his sexual endowment or until the sexual glands began to function. At that instant their physical, moral and intellectual attributes began to diverge forcing them into separate paths. Only when the sexual additive exhausted itself would their paths converge again. Then they would be resting together in the twilight of life. In the opinion of Meigs nothing resembled an old woman like an old man; and nothing more like a girl than an ingenious boy. The sexes differed in body, mind, and moral capacities only during the activation of the

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[12]Charles D. Meigs, Females and Their Diseases (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1848), pp. 34-36.

reproductive organs.[13] Meigs' attempt to combine innate and environmental thought was probably the exception rather than the rule in the nineteenth century.

Aptness

The argument of the innatist which described the limbs and organs of the female body as peculiarly suited for their purpose provoked Charles Brockden Brown. Indeed the same could be said for the mouse or grasshopper, he wrote in 1798, but did people claim one-half of the grasshoppers and mice had innate sexual physiques? If aptness were used to prove woman and man were different species, then logically nothing separated the human being from animals, insects, and birds. All displayed special survival and procreative equipment. The argument from aptness failed to show any unique essence in either male or female. It failed in another sense. It raised more problems than it solved by lowering man into the animal kingdom.[14]

Brunonianism and the Environmentalist

The medical theory of Brunonianism which traced woman's proneness to diseases and sickness to her peculiar constitution presented an

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[13] Ibid. Meigs also translated Colombat de L'Isère, A Treatise on the Diseases and Special Hygiene of Females (new ed., rev.; Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850), which tended to substantiate, in part, these views. Although he found females were females from birth, not human beings without sexual natures, de L'Isère observed only slight differences between boys and girls until the age of ten when puberty rapidly differentiated the sexes. After menopause, woman's physique gradually approached that of man. See pp. 17-19, 40; A Philokalist /pseud./, The Ideal Man (Boston: E. P. Peabody, 1842), p. 56.

[14] Brown, pp. 73, 74.

almost insurmountable challenge to the environmentalists. The lack of a counter medical theory handicapped those like Margaret Fuller who seemed haunted by the spectre that Brunonianism might have some truth to it. She cautioned women not to overuse the intuition, for it could injure her nerves and her body.[15] In other words, few of the early environmentalists flatly denied the claims of this medical theory.

One of the few who openly broke with it was Mary Wollstonecraft. She found sedentary employments combined with false notions of physical delicacy, irregular eating habits, and a scant diet the cause of the higher rate of sickness among women.[16] As long as women considered physical defects a sign of femininity, little aches and pains would engross their minds making them suffer from psychosomatic illnesses. These enervating effects would continue, she wrote, so long as false notions of sensibility and femininity motivated woman. Her health would never reach that of man's as long as she conscientiously labored to be sick. Wollstonecraft suggested that a complete revolution in the sicknesses peculiar to women could be wrought by more fresh air, sunshine, cleanliness, exercise, and a correct understanding of so-called femininity.[17]

In the nineteenth century the medical fad of hydropathy, which attempted to cure all diseases by copious amounts of water applied outside and inside the body, gave some support to Wollstonecraft's

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[15]Margaret Fuller, The Writings of Margaret Fuller, ed. Mason Wade (New York: Viking Press, 1941), p. 169.

[16]Wollstonecraft, pp. 33, 49.

[17]Ibid., pp. 33, 84, 94, 190.

views. Doctor Joel Shew's investigations revealed consumption struck down more women than men, but he attributed this to their faulty physical education, inappropriate clothing, bad living habits, and to man's physical wrong-doing to women. These sapped their energies leaving their constitutions "delicate" and susceptible to consumption. Neither sex, he concluded, "was originally created with any greater natural predisposition to this disease than the other."[18]

Beauty

The environmentalist questioned the proposition which said woman possessed superior beauty as a consequence of her sexual physique. The innatist had claimed sex annexed an attraction to the female which caused the male to pay attention to her which he did not give to his own sex. A universal persuasion had woman excelling in grace, symmetry, and smoothness. The environmentalist branded these arguments as opinions, in fact, "prejudiced" opinions, since the reasoner and his critics were male. Even the collaboration of women proved little, for they merely repeated what their male teachers had taught them. Only the male half of the species agreed that superiority of beauty belonged to woman. On the other hand, women saw a certain beauty in the male which they preferred to their own. The species of sexual attraction, then, consisted mostly of animalism to satisfy the needs of procreation.[19]

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[18]Joel Shew, Consumption: Its Prevention and Cure by the Water Treatment (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1851), pp. 23-26.

[19]Brown, pp. 74-76.

Maturation and Longevity

Another contention associated physical inferiority with early maturity. The innatist asserted that women reached their full growth and strength by the age of twenty, but man required thirty years. Vigorous health and longevity followed as a matter of course for the male. According to one environmentalist, this false reasoning rested on the English male prejudice which deemed female beauty to be of the body and male beauty of the mind. It was a matter of prejudice, for the French notions of beauty admitted more of the mind, preferring the woman of thirty whose calm reason and serious character subdued her vivacity. In the length of time required for physical development, they believed neither sex deviated from the other. Both reached their height and width by twenty while the density and rigidity of their muscles came at thirty. As far as the association of late maturation and longevity being evidence of the noblest species, Wollstonecraft tartly reminded her readers that nature had not distinguished the human male in this respect. Other animals outlived him by a considerable number of years.[20]

Polygamy

Polygamy, as used by the innatist, seemed to substantiate the ascendancy of the male. Much was made of the fact that in polygamous sections of the globe, more females than males were born. The imbalance of the sexes necessitated polygamy, which proved woman was made for

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[20]Wollstonecraft, pp. 76-77.

man, hence an inferior creature. Wollstonecraft waded into this argument with her usual sauciness. The formation of the fetus in the womb remained a mystery to mankind, but some evidence suggested an accidental physical cause accounted for its growth instead of a law of nature.[21] It was also possible that the more vigorous and hotter constitution of the two sexes produced its kind. When applied to a polygamous region such as Africa, it might explain why more females were born than males. The men, being enervated by too many wives, had less vigor while the women had hotter constitutions on account of their more irritable nerves, sensibility, and lively fancy, the result of being deprived of that share of physical love which would have been theirs in monogamy. Thus females dominated the bulk of children born. Was this sexual imbalance sufficient evidence of woman's natural physical inferiority?

The European sexual balance on the other hand threw new light on the question, said Wollstonecraft. The more accurate lists of mortality showed about the same number of male as female births. When differences did occur, male births outnumbered those of the female almost 105 to 100. If the argument of the innatist was followed to its logical conclusion, she explained, the larger number of female births indicated female inferiority in Africa and the Middle East, but the fewer female births proved her superiority in Europe. Or, man was inferior when his births outdistanced those of the women. For Wollstonecraft, the inability to prove the necessity of polygamy cancelled it as evidence

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[21] Ibid., p. 78.

of woman's subordination to man.[22]

In summary, the environmentalist believed the reproductive organs existed merely to prevent the extinction of the human race as the heart beat to prevent death, the kidneys worked to prevent poisoning, or the stomach functioned to prevent weakness. Slow maturation, longevity, and polygamy failed to prove the physical superiority or inferiority of either sex. A sexual nature was an illusion!

Myth of the "Smaller Physique"

The above arguments of the environmentalists did not seem to affect many medical writers who clung to the basic premises of innatism. Typical of these was Joseph Buchanan, who developed what he called sarcognomy. He saw a direct connection between the phrenological principle of a plurality of mental faculties and the bodily parts of woman. Sarcognomy stated that each individual faculty of the brain was connected to a specific portion of the body; thus the body was as differentiated as the mind. Buchanan found that each of the four main regions of the body--the vegetative, animal, human, and spiritual--was determined in its specific function by its connection with a certain section of the brain. Where he found the brains of the sexes to differ, he also found a corresponding difference in their bodies.[23] Woman's weaker mind gave her a smaller physique.

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[22]Foster, Account of the Isles of the South Sea as used in Wollstonecraft, p. 78.

[23]Joseph Rodes Buchanan, Outlines of Lectures on the Neurological System of Anthropology (Cincinnati: Printed at the Office of Buchanan's Journal of Man, 1854), part IV.

Mary Wollstonecraft, who advanced the first environmental arguments on this subject, claimed the physical world was governed by strength, of which the female "in general" had less than the male. Because this law of nature did not appear suspended or abrogated in her favor, man could not be denied a degree of physical superiority, a noble prerogative indeed.[24] She implicitly admitted by the phrase "in general" that some women might have the same strength as men and others might have more strength than some men. But taken as a whole, it appeared nature had given woman less strength. Other reservations appeared later in her book when she skeptically said, but "should it be proved" woman was "naturally weaker than man,"[25] it would still be unclear what advantages and privileges this gave him. She was not satisfied to leave the nagging dilemma at this point but attempted to give it clarification. Bodily strength, the only real basis for male superiority, "seemed to" give him a natural ascendancy over woman. Even an admission of this magnitude, she wrote, did not prevent each sex from gaining the same degree of virtue and knowledge or prevent women as moral and rational creatures from trying to acquire human "perfections" in the same way as men.[26] In other words, a small physique did not affect a woman's mind, character, or any of her other attributes.

Such a concession did not mean she should be proud of any so-called physical inferiority and cultivate a weak body. Wollstonecraft

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[24]Wollstonecraft, p. 4.

[25]Ibid., p. 46. Underscore is mine.

[26]Ibid., p. 44.

lashed out at men like Dr. Gregory who recommended that young ladies dissimulate healthiness and desires for vigorous activities, and dance without spirit even when a gay heart encouraged them to do otherwise. "In the name of truth and common sense," she thundered, all women should not be cast to the same level, for some had more robust constitutions than others and could take more exercise.[27] Neither should she labor to become weaker than nature intended her to be. In the animal kingdom, all young creatures required continual exercise in order to develop their muscles and frame for self-preservation, and the children of human beings needed the same harmless activities to develop strength, skill and endurance. Parents counteracted the wise designs of nature by never leaving a girl to her own directions even for a moment, Wollstonecraft said; thus she could never acquire any degree of self-preservation. The first responsibility of parents was to strengthen her body instead of weakening it with mistaken notions of beauty and delicacy.[28]

A weaker frame did not suggest to Wollstonecraft the need to feign sickliness or use cunning to gain the affections of a virtuous man. Maybe in a harem such arts were necessary, but the lordly caresses of a protector never calmed a noble mind's desire for respect. Rather than supinely dreaming life away in the garden of pleasure, woman should claim the right to pursue those reasonable pleasures and virtues which exalted mankind. A denial of this was a denial of her immortality.[29]

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[27] Ibid., p. 33.

[28] Ibid., pp. 45-47.

[29] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

The true goal of every woman was to approximate man's strength and size by a return to her natural strength. Physical independence would herald the advent of economic independence, the true sign of freedom, and finally the end of all her dependence by the return of mental vigor. The path to this temple of physical vitality should begin in infancy, said Wollstonecraft, by giving girls the same exercise and cleanliness as boys. It should continue through physical maturity. Until the natural physical superiority of man could be proved, it seemed senseless to treat woman as an inferior person.[30]

This suggestion raised the mournful howls of the libertine who feared the loss of an easy prey for his unholy designs. Wollstonecraft called these outcries of alarm premature. If by the appellation of "masculine women," man opposed feminine ardor in hunting, gambling, and racing, she heartily joined the chorus. But if they raised the din of battle against the acquisition of those ennobling virtues and talents which raised women to an equal position with men in the great scale of being, then she broke the consonance by wishing women to grow more and more masculine every day. Men should not fear that women would become too courageous, strenuous, and independent, she said, for the "apparent" bodily inferiority would make them dependent in some degree on men in the various relationships of life. This dependency should not be increased by giving a sex to virtue or confusing truth with a feared loss of sensual reveries. Relaxed beauty or helpless grace should be replaced by the attributes of a noble soul.[31]

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[30] Ibid., pp. 94, 190.

[31] Ibid., pp. 4, 189, 7.

Hence the mother who instilled true dignity of character in her daughter disregarded the inferences the crude libertine drew from any display of physical vivacity and proceeded on a plan exactly opposite that proposed by the innatist. Those indecent precautions against innocent youthful exuberance would not be instilled on account of depraved insinuations made by a small minority of men.[32]

In spite of the rancor of outraged men, the environmentalist also wanted to change the psychological debility which these false notions had given her. The most insignificant circumstances made her cling with parasitical tenacity to man who contemptuously harkened to her piteous cries for succor against the "frown of an old cow," the "jump of a mouse," or the gurgle of a stream. Such imbecility forced him to tolerate, rather than love or respect her.[33]

None of these infantine airs would exist, argued the environmentalist, if woman had sufficient exercise in place of domestic confinement which relaxed her muscles and digestive powers. If fear in girls was treated similarly to cowardice in boys, a revolution would occur in the relationship of the sexes. Not only would they be respectable members of society who discharged their duties in a rational manner, but truly attractive.[34]

During the nineteenth century the benefits of exercise were optimistically celebrated by a variety of persons. The underlying theme

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[32] Ibid., pp. 33, 46-47.

[33] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[34] Ibid., p. 69.

in the literature exalted a strong healthy body as the prerequisite for the highest possible cultivation of the mind. However the innatist generally continued to proclaim the inability of woman to exercise, work, or attain the same strength as man; in fact exercise would injure her physique irreparibly.[35]

Mary Wollstonecraft's conditional acceptance of a degree of masculine physical superiority failed to completely satisfy other environmentalists. They refused to wait for the sexes to go through a uniform physical development program to prove definitely in what the supposed physical superiority consisted, if it did exist.

"Constantia," a contemporary of Wollstonecraft, claimed women had done and could still do masculine tasks. Throughout history women had braved the hardships of life, engaged in "bold adventures," established "great enterprises," and showed incredible bravery as easily and resolutely as men. She also pointed to an earlier period of her life when she was a soldier in the American Revolutionary War, to prove that courage, pride, heroism, and endurance were by no means generated exclusively by the male physique. In everything, she concluded, women and men partook of the conditions and trends of the age; their tastes, judgments, and actions conformed exactly.[36]

Charles Brockden Brown took the idea that both sexes exhibited

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[35]The Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms, VII (1849), 137; Robley Dunglison, Human Physiology (3d ed., with numerous additions and modifications; Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Blanchard, 1838), II, 545-546.

[36]/Judith Sargent Stevens Murray/, The Gleaner (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1798), pp. 192-194, in EAI no. 34162.

a variety of physiques as his starting point. By losing sight of this simple observation, man viewed every woman as delicate of frame, and therefore unjustly circumscribed her employments. The duties of life should be determined by the physical and mental ability of the person not the sex, he said. Women who matched men in both should work in all those areas which had previously been reserved for men. With the demise of the erroneous belief in woman's inferior physique, Brown anticipated the basis of human society would shift from one organized around the sexual nature to one based on human nature.[37]

Lydia Maria Child gave specific historical examples to support the claims of Constantia and the logic of Brown. In the Brief History of the Condition of Women in Various Ages and Nations, she related stories of women whose physical exertion equalled any man and superceded that of most. During the period of chivalry some women fought like lions in the various wars, she said. These included Philippa (the wife of Edward the Third), Jane (the Countess of Mountfort), the Countess of March, the Black Agness, Marzia (the wife of the Prince of Romagna), Marguerite (the wife of St. Louis of France), and Joan of Arc. Lagertha joined Regner Lodbrog in a war against Fro, king of Sweden and Avilda, while the daughter of the king of Gothland ruled the seas by the power of her fleet. Some women in England at a later date voted for members of Parliament, administered prisons, held the hereditary office of sheriff, and ruled England without the assistance of a king. Other women who exhibited the same abilities were Maria Theresa of Austria,

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[37]Dunlap, pp. 88, 25-26.

Catherine of Russia, and Isabella of Spain. In the nineteenth century, she wrote, women still exhibited the same strength and size as men. In Russia, they paved streets, plowed, and worked in factories; in Finland, they worked like beasts of burden pulling boats and sledges; in Flanders, they carried heavy loads of coal to market on their shoulders; and in England, they cleaned the streets. In every part of Europe, an American could see women laboring in the fields and streets beside men.[38] Child, then, found incontestable proof in the pages of history that women could acquire the same physical strength as men. Another writer found history confirmed that women had often done the work while men basked in the pleasures of life. What other proof was needed to prove their qualifications to build the physical as well as the intellectual world?[39]

Assault on Brute Force

The environmentalist said the current societal arrangement degraded woman by basing the relationship of the sexes on physical force or on her need for outward protection. Men called it gallantry, yet it was the old trick of taking away her rights and substituting privileges given by his condescending hand. The aim was to keep her dependent.[40]

The environmentalist wanted physical strength subjected to the

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[38]Lydia Maria Child, Brief History of the Condition of Women in Various Ages and Nations (rev. and cor., 5th ed.; New York, 1845), II, 120-124, 146, 206, 180-181.

[39]Grimke, pp. 29-30, 59.

[40]Lydia Maria Child, Letters from New York (1st series, 2d ed.; New York: C. S. Francis and Company, 1844), p. 247.

moral faculty, hence alter the relationship of the sexes. By the 1830's the controversy which identified the larger male physique with brute force, primitive instincts, or a remnant of barbarism began to gain popularity among the environmentalists. Mary Wollstonecraft may have unwittingly contributed to the movement when she said bodily strength had distinguished heroes in the past, but recent times had depreciated it until few people thought it necessary. Women, whom circumstances had favored, opposed it, for it competed with their loveliness, the source of their undue power. An increasing number of men also saw brute force as inimical to the concept of the gentleman. Habitually bowing to power in the savage state, they showed little inclination to disavow this vestige of barbarism, even when civilization proved the superiority of mental over bodily strength.[41] Forty years after Wollstonecraft, writers condemned physical force in an attempt to rob man of his overt sign of superiority. In a sense, this stigma sought to shear man of his only true basis for superiority, as Wollstonecraft had written, as Delilah had shorn Samson of his strength.

The persistent use of religious authority to justify "brute dominion" on the grounds God had made woman physically inferior led Wollstonecraft in 1792 to call the creation a poetical story written by Moses. No one who gave serious thought to the subject ever supposed Eve to have been literally formed from one of Adam's ribs.[42]

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[41]Wollstonecraft, pp. 43, 51; for a similar comment see The American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany, XI (1849), 258; Wendell Phillips, Speeches, Lectures, and Letters (2d series; Boston: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company, 1891), p. 121.

[42]Wollstonecraft, p. 30.

In 1818 Hannah Crocker, who combined many features of the old ideology with the new, found the sexes to have been equal in every sense before the fall. As a result of the first transgression, woman forfeited her equality until the Christian dispensation when most of her original rights and dignity were restored. A few minor exceptions in her moral and physical attributes agreeable with the order of nature and the organization of the human frame remained. The differences between the sexes were not as great as people supposed. In this way Crocker lessened the hold of the arm of flesh over the spirit.[43]

Twenty years later, Sarah Grimke assaulted the creation story on similar grounds. Although woman had lost her equality because of the fall, her punishment neither included a weaker physique nor a commandment to cultivate one. In the statement "Thou shalt be subject unto thy husband, and he shall rule over thee," God predicted that woman would not prevail in any ensuing struggles between the sexes. But men, being accustomed to exercise lordship over their wives, deliberately translated the "will" as "shall" since the Hebrew and French languages used the same word to express "will"and "shall." Their perverted judgment changed a prediction addressed only to Eve into a command to Adam, she said. Thus man ran around loudly proclaiming a fear of divine punishment if he failed to subject woman to his every wish and want.[44]

With this justification, the love of power reigned in the

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[43]Hannah Mather Crocker, Observations on the Real Rights of Women (Boston, 1818), pp. 5-28.

[44]Grimke, pp. 3-13, 18, 85, 94-95. Scriptural passages she quoted were Eph. 5: 22-25, Col. 3: 18-19, and I Pet. 3: 2, 7.

hearts of men down through the ages. The unsheathed brute force sought fulfillment on the bloody battlefield, in the torture chamber, and in the quiet of the home where, said Grimke, man had acted sternly, selfishly, and irresponsibly. This masculine principle failed to temper its bias, power, ignorance, or intelligence with the feminine ones of love, truth, beauty, and harmony. Instead it exercised an unlimited tyranny over woman by turning her into an instrument for his selfish physical gratification.[45]

The lack of religious support for brute force caused Grimke to speculate on the reasons for man's reverence for it. She could only account for it by the idea that he, as man, had more of the passion for supremacy which characterized all corrupt and degraded creatures. Should it be true that man's physique, regardless of his moral and intellectual powers, made him more excellent than woman, then every man was superior to every woman by the sheer virtue of his manship. Then any man who wallowed in the quagmire of sensual reveries remained a more dignified being on account of the strength of his body than the woman who approached the perfection of Jesus Christ, said Grimke with a touch of irony. If woman's power rested in bodily dependence and man's in barbarian exhibitions, he could have such a crown of laurals. It was foreign to the kingdom of heaven, and she would not compete for the "honor."[46]

Thus the environmentalist strongly urged the animal part of man

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[45]Grimke, pp. 122, 85.

[46]Ibid., pp. 31, 94.

to be turned by reason to more beneficial activities. The fullest implications of this idea would decapitate him physically by outlawing his strength. With his mantle gone, nothing would stand between the equality of the sexes. No longer would woman need to depend on his supposed strength to govern her, the family, the city, the state, or the nation. Instead, he must rely on feminine principles to perpetuate order, beauty, and peace in the world. It was an old political maneuver--if woman could not quickly gain the same physical strength as man, then she would remove his advantage by convincing people that its use was unethical and immoral.

Conclusion

In summary, the environmentalist believed the detriments of the innatist's view of woman's physique proved it false. For those who saw this method as unfair, he replied by pointing out the weaknesses of a number of innatist arguments which had been used to substantiate her physical inferiority, including those of beauty, aptness, longevity, polygamy, and slow maturation.

As for the supposed sexual nature, the environmentalist found the anatomists or physiologists unable to tell a female heart, kidney, liver, or lung from a male one. Any suggested difference in function suffered from the same weakness. Only the reproductive organs had a sex, and they existed solely for procreation.

The strongest argument advanced by the environmentalist lay in his recognition of a variety of physiques in each sex. Historical evidence made this quite clear. It was strengthened further by doubts

as to what rights belonged to physical strength.

A high point in the philosophizing of these early thinkers was the assault on brute force as a remnant of barbarism. Its low point was the attempt to associate it solely with the male physique. Mary Wollstonecraft, the early spokesman for women, admitted a degree of masculine superiority on account of his generally stronger body and the lack of empirical evidence to prove the contrary, while other environmentalists sought to neutralize this factor by elevating the mental and spiritual over the corporeal. The advantages to the environmentalists were obvious. By mid-nineteenth century, then, they had worked out a logical explanation of how man encouraged inequities between the bodies of the sexes, blown holes in some cherished arguments of the innatist, and devised propaganda techniques to achieve their ends.

CHAPTER XI

THE NATURE OF THE MIND OF WOMAN--SELF-DEPENDENCE

Evils of the Sexed Mind

The environmentalist discredited the sexual mind theory by playing up its evil consequences. The female mind was unhealthy because of the food on which it fed, he said. Gossip and scandal comprised its mathematics and logic; its history and literature came from novels and poems. Manners and rules of society formed its theology while false refinement passed for ritualism. Woman knew the physics of folly, the chemistry of meanness, the geography of romantic illusion, and the psychology of caprice. The reflection demanded by economics or political science scarred her forehead with wrinkles, an insult to her beauty. Antithetical to her vanity, inconstancy, and debauched imagination stood the biological and physical sciences. Propriety was as systematized as moral philosophy. Shut out from a liberal education, her knowledge consisted of a hodgepodge of distorted truths.[1]

The feminine mind was so weak it exerted itself only for momentary pleasures or to start a frivolous fashion. Cunningness shackled its reason; sensibility bludgeoned its mental powers. These two--cunningness and sensibility--substituted the momentary gusts of feeling for

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[1]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), pp. 49, 53-54, 100.

the homing influence of the spirit. The sexed mind had no monitor for the passions except man, who stood forever between it and reason.[2]

Indolently acquiescent, woman sought advice instead of exerting judgment. Mental slothfulness raised obedience to an idol. Subservient to lust, her mind adorned its gilded cage with the most exacting coquettish arts. Her ever bubbling passions which never subsided into friendship kept her slightly above the animal kingdom.[3] The whole sexual theory of the mind caused her to view reason askance. When a woman gained some knowledge, mirth and scorn never ceased to caricature her, and suitors stayed away from her door. A pretty lady was the idol of society while a fine woman who stirred more sublime emotions by her intellectual beauty was its plague. After marriage the life of the former grew more ironical the older she became. As her husband grew tired of caressing her body, he longed for her mind, but, alas, she had none. She was the mechanic whose scrupulous attention kept the domestic engine running, a task requiring little mind. Therefore, her husband spent his evenings in the company of a courtesan or in the saloon while she, left in neglect, sought revenge in intrigues. If she feared the consequences of a tainted reputation, as did most women, she could find vicarious thrills in the unnatural passions aroused by

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[2]Ibid., pp. 3-6, 23-24, 26, 33, 60, 68, 71, 80, 82, 160, 167, 110; Sarah M. Grimke, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), p. 37; The Female Character Vindicated, or An Answer to the Scurrilous Invectives of Fashionable Gentlemen (Philadelphia: Thomas Bradford, 1795), p. 7, in EAI no. 28664.

[3]Wollstonecraft, pp. 28, 30-31, 36-37, 50, 80, 166, 170-171, 197.

reading novels.[4] All this the environmentalist traced to an uncultivated mind in woman.

The environmentalist refused to spend his life in the morass of the innatists but pushed on to new horizons of thought about the nature of woman's mind. He used the Lockean theory of knowledge to demonstrate that both sexes came into the world with unmarked minds. The outside world gave each the same information; no proof of special sense-data for woman had been found. In other words, truth was not sexed. If it were, the mind of woman would have to be sexed to receive its particular information; the same would hold true for man. Likewise a mind with a sex could not receive adulterated truth. The sameness of mind meant both sexes developed along identical paths when conditions were similar, or the growth of the mind depended on the environment, not on a pre-natal mental pattern.[5]

Identical senses in the sexes picked up the undifferentiated sensations from the external world and conveyed them to the mind. These irritations gradually aroused the drowsy faculties for the long journey to maturity. These positive sensations provided the mind with elementary knowledge. All other knowledge was compounded from these observed, accumulated, and analyzed facts. Thus both sexes derived the same

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[4]Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin, a Dialogue (a type-facsimile reprint of the 1st edition printed in 1798; New Haven: Carl & Margaret Rollins, 1935), p. 19; The Female Character Vindicated, pp. 7, 9; Wollstonecraft, pp. 24-27, 40, 53, 57-61, 128, 206; Grimke, pp. 38-39, 48.

[5]Frances Wright, Course of Popular Lectures as Delivered by Frances Wright (2d ed.; New York: Published at the Office of The Free Enquirer, 1829), pp. 32-33.

knowledge from sensation and reflection.[6]

The accuracy of the knowledge gained by either sex depended on the number of senses they used on an object or their acquaintance with it. It was a personal responsibility to sharpen the senses and invigorate the understanding for safaris into the outside world and for the necessary forays to tame the temper and regulate the passions.[7] As the mental functions beyond the receptivity of sensations slowly matured, the mind sought advice from more experienced ones instead of relying solely on its own ability. At the commencement of adulthood, it would, then, have the skills to continue, instead of beginning, the important task of reasoning, said the environmentalist. It would also rely only on God for answeres to supernatural questions. Women, especially, needed to strengthen these reflective powers as a balance for their hearts.[8]

Mental Equality

The environmentalist believed the same intellectual faculties of reason, judgment, memory, and imagination belonged to all human beings. Without these, no accumulation of knowledge could be possible, for each sensation would vanish with the object which excited it. However, the power of retention provided material for the reason and judgment to create endless varieties and for the taste to introduce a variety of preferences. Moral feelings, the child of thought, made all

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[6]Ibid., pp. 22, 24-29, 88, 91; Wollstonecraft, pp. 15, 35.

[7]Wright, pp. 25, 67.

[8]Wollstonecraft, pp. 24-25, 30, 56, 101, 125.

things either good or bad. There was no sexual nature to hinder the faculties. The same principle of thought permeated both sexes and produced identical effects on their minds; for neither feminine reason, imagination, memory, or judgment existed. Otherwise men and women would be of different species with different natures.[9]

All the faculties performed the basic function of concatenating sensations by placing all related ideas in the same category. This association of ideas took either of two forms: habitual or instantaneous.[10]

Habitual Association of Ideas

Habitual association of ideas was formed in the following manner. Chaotic sense-data reached the mind, which recognized their similarities and differences. For example, the mother who persisted in answering the cries of her baby established the habitual association in its mind that cries would bring it what it wanted. Eventually it became spoiled. One environmentalist believed these early mental relations gave a cast to the mind which commonly remained throughout life; the moral character of mankind followed as a matter of course. It was virtually impossible in later life for reason to disentangle the stubborn associations established before maturity. This was particularly true of those, like women, who had not been taught to think for themselves.[11]

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[9]Wright, p. 87; Brown, pp. 73, 85; Grimke, pp. 33, 60; Wollstonecraft, pp. 48-49.

[10]Wollstonecraft, p. 126.

[11]Ibid., p. 127; Thomas C. Upham, Elements of Mental Philosophy (no publishing data because part of title-page was missing), pp. 151-

The environmentalist accused parents and society of conscientiously inculcating vicious habitual associations in the minds of women. Everything in their circumscribed environment fixed impressions and emotions which gave their minds a sexual prejudice. Never allowed to examine first or subsequent associations, they lacked the vigor to throw off this factitious mind. The company of men reinforced this mental pattern by convincing women they derived their power by arousing the baser emotions of man. At this low level of sensibility, they saw little need for reason, understanding, or judgment. The books placed at their disposal also encouraged the same cruel association of ideas. No wonder women inadvertently believed their minds differed from those of men, exclaimed one environmentalist.[12]

The road to equality began where habitual thought-patterns were developed. And parents had the responsibility, in the view of Wollstonecraft, to carefully guard their daughters against a narrow environment which inhibited the full development of the mind by filling it with vicious associations. The same means of instruction suited woman and man as neither differed in their capacity to learn by observation, by experimentation, from books and other intelligent beings. With the right mental patterns, women would be as independent as men.[13]

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159. This work first appeared in 1819 as one volume, in 1831 as two volumes, and in 1861 in an abridged form. The 1831 edition was a classic work in American psychology until the works of William James appeared in the 1890's.

[12]Wollstonecraft, pp. 127-128.

[13]Ibid.

Reason, which belonged equally to both sexes, was the key to accurate habitual mental patterns. It made each person a world in and of himself and was absolutely essential for the elevation of woman, said Wollstonecraft. It might be more or less conspicuous in this or that individual, but as the emanation connecting the creator with the created, it was the same in all persons. To insinuate that sex determined how much reason a person had was sheer fantasy. To treat one sex as more rational than the other was also utterly ludicrous to the environmentalist.[14]

Yet man did just that. The scant amount of reason he allowed woman hardly raised her above the beasts of the field. After denying her reason, he inconsistently compared her to the angels, a superior order of beings which was more intelligent than man. He allowed her the goodness, piety, and benevolence of angels, but not their superior knowledge and wisdom. Yet the only way she could become the companion, "helpmate," and equal of man, said the environmentalist, was to acquire reason in all its improving expressions. The heights of heaven stood like an impassable precipice to her who expected perfection in any way other than the use of her reason. Since she was a complete person, reasoned the environmentalist, the notion of a sexual nature should not be allowed to make her a lesser part of man, hence destroy her.[15]

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[14]William Dunlap, The Life of Charles Brockden Brown, Together with Selections from the Rarest of his Printed Works, from his Original Letters, and from his Manuscripts before Unpublished (Philadelphia: James P. Parker, 1815, on microfilm, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1963), p. 84; Wollstonecraft, pp. 15, 58, 111; Wright, pp. 175-176.

[15]Wollstonecraft, pp. 58-59.

The environmentalist praised her as a human being wherever the false system of female education and accomplishment placed woman with the colorful flowers, singing birds, and lovely angels. He stood posed for battle wherever society denied her access to knowledge and virtue and made her take things on trust. Wherever people allotted her only an instinctive common sense, he presented reason as the infallible guide.[16]

Instantaneous Association of Ideas

The second group of concepts, the instantaneous association of ideas, was a more rapid concatenation than that produced by deliberate reflection. The environmentalist credited this activity to the character given the mind during infancy rather than the will. It worked somewhat like this. A number of isolated facts went directly to the memory until some fortuitous circumstance made them dart into the mind. Here each idea, as it was being assimilated, instantaneously explained others. At other times, the raw materials in the mind tended to arrange themselves with astonishing rapidity during states of profound thought. An individual exercised some control by consciously organizing his thoughts or transcribing some unusual sketches from the imagination, but the original concepts seemed to appear spontaneously.[17] This subtle electric fluid cooperated with reason sometimes and at other times snubbed it.

Wollstonecraft believed this process was the very essence of

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[16] Ibid., pp. 26, 59-60, 111.

[17] Ibid., p. 126.

genius, whose associations of thought surprised, delighted, instructed, and transcended the sluggish imagination of the generality of people. The vivid pictures drawn by these glowing minds taught mankind to view with interest and awe the objects it had unceremoniously neglected. When a genius loaned men his insight, they saw the images which for all practical purposes had been invisible before. Lest some think this skill innate, Wollstonecraft reminded her readers that education supplied the man of genius with the knowledge to give variety and contrast to his associations. Many a genius had remained rustic and gross, she said, without disciplined thinking and writing.[18]

Intuitive Powers

Above and beyond habitual and instantaneous association of ideas existed the intuitive function of the mind. It transcended the ordinary processes of sensation, perception, and reasoning, and supposedly was at the junction where the spiritual blended with the material, physiology with psychology, earth with heaven, the gross with the immaterial, and the limited with the limitless. Like the mind which was indirectly connected with the whole body through the medium of the brain, the spiritual communed with the mind through the intuitive faculty. By this means the spiritual nature illuminated the mind, the brain, and then, the body.

The intuition perceived truth so quickly that it baffled research and caused many people to wonder whether reminiscence or

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[18] Ibid., p. 127.

ratiocination in their celerity had escaped the awareness of the mind. Some wondered if it were a faculty so electric in movement and spiritual in tendency that man knew little about it. Whether it was a sublime faculty or lightning-like associations of the mind, the environmentalists generally agreed that intuition existed and that women had it in varying degrees.[19] Constantia in the 1790's went to history to prove every part of the earth throughout recorded history had at one time or another proclaimed that the Father of the Universe revealed Himself more readily to females than males. Woman had possessed "the mysteries of religion, the arcana of physic, and the ceremonies of incantation" to the point that several nations had ascribed qualities approximating divinity to women.[20] James Neal observed that Americans commonly accepted intuition as the superior mental faculty of the female, for it was said, any subject which she could not comprehend at one view was unsuited to her mind, and she would never comprehend it. Her incapacity for profound study, laborious research and observation kept her from discussions and schools where these were taught.[21]

In the 1840's Margaret Fuller used the insight of transcendentalism to explain the nature of intuition. As a philosophical movement, transcendentalism drew much of its support from the German

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[19] Ibid., p. 126.

[20] /Judith Sargent Stevens Murray/, The Gleaner (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1798), III, 195, in EAI no. 34162.

[21] James Armstrong Neal, An Essay on the Education and Genius of the Female Sex (Philadelphia, 1795), pp. 8-9, in EAI no. 29135.

writers Immanuel Kant, Johann Schilling, and Johann Fichte, from Calvinism, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism and was passed on in the United States by its main spokesmen Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, William Channing, and Margaret Fuller. Its epistemology and metaphysics contributed substantially to Fuller's thought about women. According to its theory of knowledge, a person had two divisions in his brain, the mind (phenomenal) and the spirit (transcendental). The first gained knowledge from an analysis and synthesis of sense-data; the second received impressions from the invisible world beyond the grasp of the senses. Thus there were two sources of knowledge: reason and intuition. The metaphysical premise of this philosophical movement described the universe as pervaded by an Over-Soul or God who flowed through all men. The inflowing of the Over-Soul gave one's spirit the insight which tied all the seemingly unrelated sensations from the outside world into one "grand pattern." But this pantheistic God only entered those disciplined to receive or express its truths. In the view of Emerson, God neither let a person see parts of the "grand pattern" nor receive the whole picture until he was prepared to appreciate it. Little by little he might gain a universal view. These mystically perceived ideas which stirred man emotionally, presented themselves spontaneously to the intuitive faculty, and the reason wrapped them in language which other people could understand.[22]

Fuller labelled reason, masculine, and the intuitive apprehension of the "lyrical structure" of reality, feminine. She justified this

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[22]Margaret Fuller, The Writings of Margaret Fuller, ed. Mason Wade (New York: Viking Press, 1941), p. 176.

action by the fact that people commonly associated the former with men and the latter with women, and intuition seemed to have appeared more often in women in the past. But as a principle it influenced the minds of both sexes equally, especially when men did not resist its inspiration. Masculine obstinacy had left the pages of history dotted with many more women whose understanding had been swayed by this electrical or magnetic force. Nature never intended it to be incarnated pure in any form but mingled with the masculine principle. In other words, the Over-Soul never established an absolute law which prohibited man's higher faculties from the benefits of intuitive insights or barred reason from stabilizing woman's intuitive flights.[23]

In fact, the intuition enlightened the faculty of genius in either sex and, combined with steadfast contemplation, revealed beneficial truths for all mankind. Under the spell of this feminine principle, the faculties organized, harmonized, and humanized the external world by the meaning they saw behind the multiplicity of life. Character was discerned behind the countenance, coming events anticipated, and successful action prescribed by it for all emergencies. The inspiration of religion and the literal convictions of the spirit depended on this clairvoyance. The unobstructed insight of the intuitive power or the spell of the Muse gave a person a deep understanding of reality in the form of either prophecy or poetry. Poets, writers, and prophets, whether male or female, Fuller said, had been recipients of its favors; in fact, poets could not do without it. By its powers,

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[23]Margaret Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men. Woman versus Women," The Dial, IV (July 1843), pp. 38, 43.

Cassandra foresaw the consequences of the turmoil surrounding her, and the Seeress discerned the true character of a person behind an outward appearance. At times she perceived a feminine form--harmony, beauty, and love--behind the man, at other times, the reverse.[24]

As an instinctive seizure of causes, as a simple breathing out of the singleness of life, the intuition could not classify, recreate, select, or animate its insights. It looked to reason for these functions. It furnished the living model which inspired the artist; he conceived the poem by his intuitive powers but his reason gave it objective form.[25] The knowledge gained in these flashes of reality (beyond the power of the senses) had to be referred to the material world for verification to guard against the fantasy usurping the throne of knowledge. In this, Fuller adhered to the Emersonian principle that man did not always possess the ability to clearly receive and express transcendental truth, hence he had to rethink his ideas or go back to the source of inspiration several times to guarantee accuracy. The only clue as to whether or not an insight was the product of the intuition or the wild roaming of the imagination lay in the realm of physical possibilities.

Fuller opposed confusing intuition, or female magnetism as she sometimes called it, with mesmerism (hypnotism). The latter, she said, was a mental trance produced by one human being on another, the former a spiritual one produced directly by Divinity upon a person. She

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[24]Fuller, Writings, p. 177.

[25]Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 36, 43.

feared the direction mesmerism had taken since its introduction by Dr. Friedrich A. Mesmer in the latter part of the eighteenth century. It threatened the growing prestige of the intuition, especially as a feminine principle. Mesmer claimed a subtle electromagnetic fluid engulfed the world and carried mental impulses from one human mind to another. When a person had developed his powers of receptivity, he could magnify each impulse received from this ether-like fluid until his mind understood the message carried by it. Of more importance, he could increase the force of his thought waves until he could hypnotize a person with sympathetic brain-waves. Like the irresistible power of the magnet over iron, the hypnotist could make the person do almost anything under this spell.

The mesmerists had developed three stages of magnetism by the nineteenth century: the mesmeric sleep or somnambulism; the awakened, but hypnotized person who readily communicated with his mesmerizer, was often insensible to pain, and had a community of interests with his mentor; and the final stage in which the subject retained all the powers and abilities of the previous two but seemed to have acquired new senses. Clairvoyant, he might read a closed letter, book, or watch behind his back, or tell what was going on in the next room or further away, or predict the course of a disease, or predict coming events. By the time mesmerism had reached the United States in the 1820's, its practitioners had already tried to identify it with all possible supernatural phenomena. They had gathered spiritualism, faith-healing, religion, therapeutics, mental-telepathy, and intuitionalism under its

wings. However Dr. James Stanley Grimes, a follower of Mesmer, dampened many of these wilder claims by announcing them as mostly mental suggestions. And the revelation of the false spiritualism of the famous Fox sisters, Margaret and Kate, in the 1850's did not help the movement either. In spite of these discoveries the advocates of mesmerism continued their encompassing movements. It was these last activities which disturbed Margaret Fuller. She knew the reputation of feminine intuition would suffer should it become closely associated with spiritualism and other mental quackery. Witch-hunting would begin all over again. It had taken too many centuries to obtain a degree of respect for intuition to again lose all its benefits for untold ages.[26]

Fuller went on to say that the power of intuition had never been fully developed in any period of history. Although more women than men had utilized it in the past, too few of them had cultivated a pure, modest self to have its fullness. Their vulgar selves had overshadowed the vision of the spiritual eye. Propriety, which shared much of the blame for this in the past, she said, persisted in making the woman with developed intuitive powers unhappy. Woman was expected to conform to the behavior of those grosser souls around her who did not discern the deeper impulses behind her actions. Instead, they

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[26] Ibid., p. 38; George Combe, et al., Moral and Intellectual Science: Applied to the Elevation of Society (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1848), p. 85; Andrew Jackson Davis, The Magic Staff (New York: J. S. Brown and Co., 1854), pp. 204-206, 218-219, 308-312, 334-335, 366-367; Andrew Jackson Davis, The Principles of Nature, her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind (New York: S. S. Lyon and William Fishbough, 1847), pp. xxiii, 28-33; James Stanley Grimes, Etherology, or the Philosophy of Mesmerism and Phrenology (New York: Saxton and Miles, 1845), pp. 20-22, 24, 29, 210-212.

became frightened at any woman under the spell of magnetism. Fuller saw society mete out the same treatment to members of either sex who might be under the apparition of genius, but a harsher punishment in the case of women. They were expected to have more external modesty, self-restraint, and decor. Should she marry a man with a grosser nature, her life would be more miserable. All the bitterness of wounded self-love would arouse the prejudices of manhood to justify his maltreating her; his detestation would know few limits. Under these conditions the revelatory powers shrank.

History revealed the pettiness of men in another way. As a collective whole, they had deliberately weakened the physique of woman to the point she became sick when the powers of inspiration and prophecy were used very much.[27] They had fostered this in the name of love for womankind, to protect them from priestcraft, lovers, and self-delusion--the fruits of the intuition. Fuller charged these seldom happened to women whose intellect was developed in proportion to their affectionate powers. With the intellectual consciousness calm and deep, inspiration would not be confused with fancy. An equilibrium would be established between her nervous susceptibility and understanding.[28]

It remained a mystery to mankind how the electrical fluid flowed without impediments, invigorated and embellished life. Its activities through women--and a few men--had raised mankind from

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[27]Fuller, Writings, p. 169.

[28]Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 38.

degradation to its present (1844) level of enlightenment. Fuller prophesied that it would open new, deeper, and purer truths than had heretofore refreshed the earth, should it be given free play in both sexes. One creative energy and one incessant revelation would come from each individual--not from one sex.[29]

Mental Equality

Habitual and instantaneous association of ideas and intuitive insight gave woman the power to generalize ideas, an ability man had reserved for himself down through the ages, claimed the environmentalist. A truly cultivated understanding tied a multitude of facts together in a generalization which deserved the appellation of knowledge only when it gave meaning to events. Unfortunately this systematizing power had been denied woman on the grounds it violated her sexual nature. The innatist had allowed her only an instinctive common sense never brought to the test of reason, said Mary Wollstonecraft, as a guide in life.[30]

When women were allowed to generalize facts, wrote the environmentalist, they would sound the profound depths or ascend to the sublime heights of every science; no erudition would be beyond them. The accurate and rapid progress which they made in the elementary grades demonstrated this capacity, but because they were forced from school at an early age, the potential remained dormant. The innatist had

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[29]Fuller, Writings, p. 177; Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 44.

[30]Wollstonecraft, pp. 26, 60.

explained this early precociousness as the sexual nature rushing the mind of woman to its full capacity, a temporary situation which ended as the sturdy mind of man gradually overtook and surpassed hers. Wollstonecraft reminded the innatist that genius had also appeared very early in a number of males: Cowley, Milton, and Pope, to mention a few. She also found the same precocity in males who were introduced into society at a very early age. When the environmental experiences had been the same, she concluded, no difference in the maturity of minds of men and women could be found.[31]

Mental equality was also poignantly evident when the environmentalist contemplated the activities of women which equalled those of men. Hannah Adams's Alphabetical Compendium of the Various Sects approached the objectivity of any masculine study of comparative religion, and Lady Mary Montagu's Letters had the excitement, literary skill, and educational value of any travelogue by men. Lydia Maria Child's Brief History of the Condition of Women proved women could grasp the whole range of man's recorded history. Her use of the methods and findings of higher criticism in the Progress of Religious Ideas Through Successive Ages promised to open new vistas in religion for woman. She proved women could grasp the complex abstraction of historical continuity and apply it to religious developments. Margaret Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century illustrated that the female could sound the depths of philosophy and the classics as well as man. Frances Wright's Course of Popular Lectures explained the epistemology of environmentalism, and in

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[31]Ibid., p. 76; Murray, III, 197, 217; Neal, pp. 4-6.

the second volume she interpreted recent political developments in the United States. Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman achieved a synthesis and critique of ideas in psychology, philosophy, history, and etiquette. In literature Lydia Huntley Sigourney and Sara Willis Parton revealed the imaginative and creative powers of woman in their novels, along with Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, and others. Sara Josepha Hale edited Godey's Lady's Magazine as well as any male editor could have done.

Mrs. Judith Murray's sojourn in the Continental Army revealed that woman equalled man in physical exertions; Elizabeth Blackwell's graduation and practice of medicine made woman aware of her mental capacity in this area; Dorothea Dix pioneered better treatment for the insane and proved the tenacity of feminine convictions and persistent efforts toward a goal. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton evidenced the organizing ability of woman; Emma Willard and Catharine Beecher substantiated the elevating influence woman had on civilization through education; and Antoinette Brown's ordination to the clergy, and subsequent pulpit experience, proved woman could fathom divine truths in the mind of God. Other strong-minded women were Mercy Warren, Abigail Adams, Philenia, Sojourner Truth, Fanny Kemble, Madame de Genlis, Harriet Martineau, Madame de Stael, Lady Jane Grey, Hannah More, and Elizabeth Rowe, to mention a few. The environmentalist saw the achievements of woman as truly magnificant, but argued they would have been greater if ignorant selfish men had loosened the

institutional controls over them.[32]

These achievements convinced few people of mental equality, for Americans continued to believe Jehovah had created woman mentally inferior to man and these few women were aberrations of nature--the exception rather than the rule. The environmentalist answered that God had created male and female in His image, given them the same sceptre, and crowned them with the same glory. In moral perceptions, intellectual faculties, apprehension of spiritual truths, and ability to obey divine injunctions, each was endowed as richly as the other. Had God placed woman under the guardianship of man, He would have placed a fallible being between her and her Maker. For God to surrender His authority to such an imperfect being would contradict His laws.[33]

From beginning to end, the Bible clearly warned mankind to worship and obey only the Lord God. Yet man, drunk with arrogance and power, told woman to depend on me and I will be your teacher. In the absence of scriptural support for mental inferiority, said the environmentalist, woman should not be the scholar of man as Rousseau had loudly advocated. She had to use her own mind if she hoped to be the scholar of God; blind tutelage from a fallible man or husband was senseless.[34]

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[32]Murray, III, 218-219; Grimke, pp. 62-65; Wollstonecraft, pp. 110-115; Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 34; Lydia Maria Child, Brief History of the Condition of Women in Various Ages and Nations (rev. and cor., 5th ed.; New York, 1845), II, 120-124, 126-129; Neal, p. 7.

[33]Grimke, pp. 84-85.

[34]Ibid., pp. 10, 17-18, 88; Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 10; Wollstonecraft, p. 11.

Should the chains be broken which held the female sex back, women would soon be either the friends or slaves of man, wrote Wollstonecraft. Doubt would disappear as to whether they were moral agents or the link connecting men with the brutes; their natural position in the great chain of being would be clearly established. And if they proved themselves like the animals, created principally for the use of man, a new approach to the relationship of the sexes would appear. Man would patiently let them bite the bridle without the mocking ridicule which characterized his present behavior towards them. But should their rationality be substantiated, he would be obliged to forego subjugating their reason. Should the dignity of bowing only to God stir their minds, he would have to give them understanding in place of sensibility and wisdom in place of cunning and dissimulation. Principle would teach them to submit to necessity or the dictate of reason.[35]

The challenge to this mental equality came from the psychologists of the day and their so-called "exact science," phrenology. This intellectual fad which raged in every corner of the land, found the female brain smaller in size, shape, and function. It was a tenacious environmentalist who maintained his balance when the findings of the learned professions ran so strongly against his reasonings and meager information.

Phrenology was the brain-storm of Dr. Franz J. Gall in 1776 and Dr. J. G. Spurzheim, its second widely-known advocate after 1804. When

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[35]Wollstonecraft, pp. 40-41; Murray, pp. 197-198; Fuller,"The Great Lawsuit," pp. 8, 35.

it reached the United States in the 1820's, it immediately gained an ascendancy which it retained during much of the century. Spurzheim explained phrenology as a system in which the emotional and intellectual functions resided in the brain, a plurality of mental faculties existed in the brain, each with special functions to perform, and that the shape of the skull and brain corresponded exactly. The individual bumps on a person's head fixed the location of any special intellectual and moral gifts he might have. The size of a particular faculty could be determined by the external configuration and size of the head. The larger the faculty the more active it was; the smaller the organ the less energetic.[36]

The phrenologist believed the differences in cerebral organizations of the sexes coincided with their different behavior patterns. This was to say, some external lumps were persistently larger in women but smaller in men, or vice versa. The faculties of philoprogenitiveness (love of offspring), cautiousness, veneration, and adhesiveness (the tendency of woman to attach herself to those around her) were larger in women, hence more active. In men, it was amativeness (desire for physical love), self-esteem (pride), constructiveness, and

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[36]J. G. Spurzheim, Outlines of Phrenology (Boston: Marsh, Capen & Lyon, 1832), pp. 8-15; James Stanley Grimes, Outlines of Grime's New System of Phrenology (Albany, New York: J. Munsell, 1840), pp. 1-21; R. H. Collyer, Manual of Phrenology, or the Physiology of the Human Brain (4th ed., rev. and enl.; Dayton: B. J. Ells, 1842), pp. 50-54; Combe, p. 85; Samuel Jackson, The Principles of Medicine, Founded on the Structure and Functions of the Animal Organism (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1832), pp. 207-208. See also George Combe, The Constitution of Man (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1859), passim.

combativeness.[37]

Franz J. Gall had wondered what the purpose of the large organ of philoprogenitiveness was and after much contemplation discovered its use. He noticed this singular resemblance between the skulls of woman and monkeys, and observed that its function in both coincided in a remarkable degree. It suddenly came to him in the midst of a lecture that the most remarkable characteristic of monkeys was their extreme affection for their young. It was woman's most outstanding trait too. He went on to say that women and female animals excelled in philoprogenitiveness more than men or male animals; hence he unwittingly revitalized the idea of woman as the connecting link between man and the monkeys.[38]

For the phrenologist this faculty attached girls to dolls and infants; its absence addicted boys to sports and the outdoors. Physiologically it made her head longer and narrower, and its absence made his broader and rounder; it also made her cerebellum smaller. She excelled in the affections and he in the intellectual. The traditional division of the faculties between the sexes was perpetuated by the phrenologists. This division of the mind, said Spurzheim, accounted for the essential and prominent features of the female

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[37]Spurzheim, pp. 21, 38-40; Collyer, pp. 62-63, 90.

[38]George Combe, A System of Phrenology (New York: William H. Collyer, 1841), p. 111; Phrenological Journal, II (1842), 23; Joseph Rodes Buchanan, Outlines of Lectures on the Neurological System of Anthropology (Cincinnati: Printed at the Office of Buchanan's Journal of Man, 1854), p. 9.

character and should determine her education.[39]

Self-Dependence

The environmentalist considered his job half done after assaulting the education which society gave to woman. He proposed a new goal--self-dependence--to guide her mental growth. It meant mental independence, self-sufficiency, culture, and self-subsistence.

A self-dependent woman never saturated her mind with the notions of other people. She did her own thinking. Society might teach her to gain mental perfection by loading the memory with facts, explained the environmentalist, but they did little to unfold the understanding. Mental independence went beyond a well stored memory.[40] To be self-dependent she had to form her own opinions, judgment, and taste. A fearless spirit of inquiry would free her from reliance on other people's sentiments and prejudices. It meant self-control from within rather than external control by custom or propriety. The rule of the soul was far superior in determining her outward behavior than the etiquette book.[41]

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[39]Spurzheim, p. 96; Combe, A System of Phrenology, p. 214; J. G. Spurzheim, The Natural Laws of Man: A Philosophical Catechism (6th ed., enl. and imp.; New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1851), pp. 84-90.

[40]The Lady's Pocket Library (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1792), p. 192, in EAI no. 24452. Although not an environmentalist, Marchioness Lambert advocated an almost solitary self-centered, non-communicative type of mental self-dependence. Mary Wollstonecraft and others broadened Lambert's thought. In spite of minor variations, a general outline of self-dependence emerged from this meshing of thought after 1792. On how the innatist modified mental culture at a later date see J. M. Austin, A Voice to Youth (Utica, New York: Grosh and Hutchinson, 1838), pp. 341-349.

[41]Wollstonecraft, pp. 53-57, 176; Wright, p. 37; Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 16; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 193-194.

Self-dependence included fitting the imagination to the harness and making it pull in the direction blazed by reason. Solid employment would check the wild roaming of the imagination. Instead of managing a fortune or directing her own personal affairs, woman was forced to give herself entirely to the whimsical pleasures of the imagination which stood between her and truth. When fancy commanded the ship, it guided her whithersoever the winds of passion blew. She saw only what she wanted to see while a mutinous reason struggled vainly in the brig. A mentally self-dependent woman preferred reason to an untenable imagination, thus avoiding much of the suffering and pain engendered by an uncontrolled imagination.[42]

She was a self-reliant woman. Not beholden to anyone, the world had to recognize her as a self-directing agent entitled to the self-respect given to the person who knew the extent of his mental capacities and refused to engage in inquiries or controversies beyond them. She would know the difference between opinion and fact and have the courage to be ignorant of what surpassed her at any given time.[43]

A mentally self-reliant woman would never be lonely, for she would always have a place of refuge within herself to which she could retreat to reorganize and revitalize her dreams. She would be her own true friend through life, explained Fuller. The world might offer sentimental and passionate tantilization, but she would feel weaker, less modest, more unjust, and more dependent from constant contact with

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[42]Wollstonecraft, p. 180.

[43]The Lady's Pocket Library, p. 191.

it. In the end it would overcome her, said Lambert. Self-dependence meant foregoing evanescent worldly pleasures for the true felicity which came with peace of mind, devotion to reason, and discharge of responsibilities. Petty occurrences would no longer rule her as they presently (1792) did, wrote Wollstonecraft. The goal of mental improvement would overshadow everything.[44]

Neither male nor female differed in this respect, said the environmentalist. When any person lived in too much contact with people, he became a stranger to his own resources. A detraction or imbecility soon enervated him, and only a period of isolation would rejuvinate his "self-impulse." Otherwise, he would perish, said Fuller. A few hours each day in solitude and reflection would weaken the opinions of the world, calm the passions, and strengthen the understanding. Rededication to truth would then be possible. As one writer concluded, when woman depended less on the world, it had less power over her, but when she lost her self-reliance, she became dependent on everything else. She would enjoy pleasure occasionally, but not give herself up to it. Thus she would rely less and less on sensual men. A mind well-trained and stored with principles would bask in its own solace.[45]

Woman was entitled to an equal education with man, said the environmentalist, because she had an immortal mind. It mattered not

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[44]Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 16, 46; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 177-178, 195; Wollstonecraft, p. 101.

[45]Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 34-36, 44; Wollstonecraft, p. 64; The Lady's Pocket Library, pp. 194-195.

whether she did a little or a lot, or whether she painted, wrote, or philosophized. She, like any being of affection and reason, remained incomplete without self-dependence.[46]

The environmentalist believed that self-dependence should be the right of woman instead of a privilege yielded by man. In support of this they integrated some arguments of the anti-slavery movement into the woman's movement. The advocate of Negro freedom assumed no natural law existed which allowed one man to hold another in bondage. Likewise, man had no natural right to hold woman in slavery or even put well-intended restrictions on her. Like the Negro, she was a soul who was accountable only to the Master who gave one law for all souls. Man, the environmentalist said, had taken away most of her opportunities for mental improvement and lavished them on himself. Then he challenged her, like he did the slave, to show evidence of rational endowment before conceding intellectual privileges to her.[47] She needed a fair chance to answer this reproach, said Margaret Fuller. And it would be wonderful if he would help her gain self-fulfillment. Since his fairest idea of woman was as a sister to a brother in a family, she had to achieve self-dependence inspite of narrow-minded man. The only mental independence he had ever allowed her was to make her a better mother, nurse, cook, and domestic companion. But her infinite scope demanded more than one exclusive relation, especially more than the domestic one, said Fuller. The full development of her mind would prepare her

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[46]Wollstonecraft, p. 57.

[47]Grimke, pp. 34, 37-39, 48-49, 61-62.

immortal soul for any relation.[48]

This anticipated a new marriage relationship. The present one, said the environmentalist, forced woman to give excessive devotion to one man which temporalized love, hence all but dissolved it. The self-dependent woman would not continue this idolatry or accept his proposal out of a sense of weakness or poverty. Able to take her rightful place beside man, she would know how to love and be loved when she desired to marry. She would give her hand in dignity without the vows and arrangements required in the present state of marriage. Because separate "units" formed an equal union, she would not love any being from the fulness of her being until she was free of compromise, complaisance, and helplessness.[49]

Furthermore, the mentally independent married woman would become the symbol of the female world, hithertofore the monopoly of the virgin. The idea that she belonged to her husband would vanish as marriage would never completely absorb her or shut her off from the world. It would only be an experience to her as it was to man, for a love would no longer be the object of her whole existence. She would live for truth and love in their universal expressions. The perpetual virginity of her mind would stimulate the homage of mankind; its loss would be considered far worse than the loss of physical virginity. She would have a complete life to live the same as man. Whereas the innatist wanted woman to act and rule as woman, the environmentalist

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[48]Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 16, 45.

[49]Fuller, Writings, p. 216.

wanted her to grow as an individual, discern as an intellect, and unfold the powers of the soul.[50]

Last of all, self-dependence entitled a woman to view the whole cosmos instead of the microscopic peek previously allotted to her. As a student of the "universal-spirit" she joined the search for the "central truth," the secrets of nature, and the revelations of the spirit. In this way, she shared the responsibility to subdue and conquer the earth equally with man.[51]

A number of salubrious results were anticipated from self-dependence. Thinking instead of feeling would enlarge woman's mind, clarify her ideas, correct her disposition, humanize her feelings, and make her the friend of man. Her bosom would cease to be the haven of invidious and malignant passions. She would be at home in all social affairs. She would shun pedantry; instead of asserting, she would question; instead of demanding, she would ask. As a rational free citizen, she would be a good wife and mother who pursued broadening, informative, and sublimating activities. Folly and frivolity would never tempt her. She would be tolerant of the frailities of man who acted the part of "brother and friend" instead of the "lord and tutor." Self-dependence would exchange the social and economic arrangements based on function and employment for those based on individual capacities. The idea of a sphere for each sex would vanish. The ability of

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[50]Ibid., pp. 197, 216-217; Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 14.

[51]Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 1-3, 39; Fuller, Writings, p. 172.

the individual would be what mattered. The traditional weaknesses of the female sex would disappear, and her admission to the fraternity of equality would be guaranteed. Self-control, self-reliance, and self-direction would end the need for external controls and man's condescension toward her. She would have a genuine love and fear of God, which human tribunal like man could not instill. She would stand beside him in the great scale of being and after death, would find herself as prepared for the next life as he.[52]

In short, mental self-sufficiency would bring woman self-respect, draw her closer to God, raise her in the great scale of being, end her dependence on man, and prepare her for any adversity of life. She would cease to be the personal servant of man, or exist like an animal, or abuse her mind, or merely glamorize her physique. Man would find this mentally cultured woman, who satisfied both his physical and spiritual needs, a faithful friend throughout life.

Conclusion

By mid-nineteenth century, the environmentalist used the Lockean theory of knowledge to postulate the mental equality of the sexes. A list of historical and contemporary examples of female excellence in literature, politics, religion, economics, and physical exertions was mustered to add credulity to their contention. He ascribed the limited environment of women as the reason why so few of them had measured up to the standards set by men. The development of self-dependence in woman

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[52]Murray, pp. 188-191; Wollstonecraft, p. 197; Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 14-16; Fuller, Writings, p. 197.

in an unlimited environment would reconcile the mental imbalance between the sexes. Then both would be established in the natural prerogatives of human beings.

The environmentalists failed to capture the sciences of medicine, philosophy, moral philosophy, physiology, and the various popular manifestations of psychology. However these sciences would become friendlier as the century wore itself out.

Despite the lack of scientific support more and more people listened to the environmentalist arguments for mental equality of the sexes as evidence by the appearance of colleges for girls which tried to equal those for men--Troy (1821), Hartford (1823), and Mount Holyoke (1837)--and private colleges which introduced coeducation--Oberlin College (1833) and Antioch College (1852)--and the appearance of coeducation in public universities--Iowa University (1858).

CHAPTER XII

THE ENVIRONMENTALLY-SHAPED CHARACTER OF WOMAN

Many ingenious arguments had been produced, said the environmentalist, to prove that the two sexes in acquiring perfection should aim at separate and different characters. The resulting ideal image for woman created a chasm between the sexes. Although he believed woman could not have a sexual character without a sexual nature, physique, or mind, he knew the very constitution of society in nineteenth century America obstinately forced an artificial and unnatural personality upon her. This entrenched system of thought, which could not be taken lightly, had to be clearly in mind before one could criticize it or offer a new image.

The Ideal Feminine Character of the Innatist Described

With all due respect to their opposition, the environmentalist described the ideal woman of the innatist before offering his own. This popular image of the day pictured femininity springing from the heart and masculinity from the mind. She felt; he thought. She epitomized compassion, love, and sympathy, whereas he characterized wisdom, reason, and objectivity. Special social rules, manners, tastes, and customs governed dress, conversation, grooming and cleanliness of each sex. Modesty, weakness, a small waist and curving shoulders were expected, along with a high sense of domestic duty, charm, and the accomplishments

to entertain friends. She did not presume to love until her parents had chosen for her. Loud laughter was considered vulgar and a fast pace ungenteel. Garden work exposed her delicate complexion to the sun and wind, study made her too literary, and cloth for sewing, other than gossamer, marred the delicacy of her hands.

Marriage completed her happiness and gave her real existence. She was expected to give her husband admiration, to endeavor in every way possible to please him, and to be submissive and obedient. An endearing ignorance of everything beyond the home and social life was considered feminine.

Because a wife was not required to have brains, the ideal woman guarded against being thought clever. She concentrated on the business of her life, marriage, and avoided all appearances of being a learned person. As an exquisite and happy helpmate, this humble, smiling creature laughed at her husband's oft-repeated jokes, played the piano, fussed over the comfort of his guests, and dressed to his taste. To contradict, scold, criticize, mock, or plot against him constituted marital treason, but to coax, wheedle, persuade, tempt, and entertain were techniques to manage him. Perfect feminine excellence developed by losing herself in a "life of his"; to have a "life of her own" turned heaven upside down. To think of tomorrow questioned his ability to rule and provide. To be dependent on a man for protection, knowledge, decisions, shelter and subsistence, and to accept his religion on faith were her highest virtues. Susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, refinement of taste, weak elegancy

of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners added the luster to her personality. What more could a man desire in a mate? What more could a woman wish to be? asked American society.

To the environmentalist this aberration of nature insulted the human character in each person. However, the validity of this objection depended on whether character was inherited or acquired.[1]

The Environmental Basis of Character

Anyone could acquire a feminine personality if she had the right environment. For example, the occupation an individual (or a class) followed always shaped the character generally and individually. The singularity of woman's occupation limited them to one personality while the numerous occupations open to men led to a variety of masculine characters. Confined to the domestic sphere, women's thoughts dwelt on the price of ribbons, cloth, candles, meats, and vegetables much as those of the merchant did on the prices of the day and other facets of commerce. They talked about what they knew--babies, fans, tea-cups, qualifications of a chamber maid or nurse, cooking, furniture, and dress-making, as the lawyers talked about laws, treaties, and clauses of the laws, or the doctor about cadavers, patients, hospitals, and disease.[2] They reflected on all the actions and characters which they saw and heard in their limited sphere and

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[1]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), p. 5.

[2]Ibid., pp. 57, 85.

delighted to pass them on to other women at the first opportunity. At social gatherings, they naturally looked for other women who could converse on topics of common knowledge. In this they imitated other occupational groups.[3]

Women were accused of having an innately narrow character, said the environmentalist. But she differed little from men in this respect. A man might lack skill as an artist, be partial as a historian, be void of humanity as a merchant, lack vision and insight as a politician, or love discipline and the barracks as a soldier. In each instance the occupation, not heredity, tended to make the person narrow in some way. However, the range of male opportunities in government, politics, war, diplomacy, agriculture, and commerce led to an infinite number of characters. Men could be choleric or sanguine, gay or grave, firm or weak, overbearing or submissive, spineless or aggressive, but women were levelled to the one plateau of yielding softness, gentle compliance, suffering meekness, and loving docility. If the sphere of woman were enlarged, wrote one environmentalist, the same variety and complexity of individuals would appear among them.[4]

The limited way to preferment open to the female also contributed to her homogeneity of character. In the middle ranks of life where abilities and virtues were absolutely necessary to gain fame and fortune, the opportunity for these exertions was available to men.

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[3]Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin, a Dialogue (a type-facsimile reprint of the 1st edition printed in 1798; New Haven: Carl & Margaret Rollins, 1935), pp. 16-17, 19-20.

[4]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

Their counterparts, like the rich, were born with certain privileges--sexed privileges in this case. Those with the appellation of lady were never to be contradicted in public or expected to do manual labor. The negative virtues of patience, docility, good humor, and almost feeble-mindedness were expected from them. They gained femininity the same way the rich gained nobility, by a kind of social entail. Being under the influence of the sentiments, both lacked a disciplined imagination to turn experiences into generalizations, or the force of passions to stir themselves to action. The local situations swallowed them up, making their characters similar; each had ranks and privileges by the courtesy of custom. With the exception of warriors, wrote Wollstonecraft, no great men had appeared among the nobility. With the inherited right to be made over, caressed, attended to, and revered, the female did not have to exert herself to get the esteem given to men who developed their superior talent. Neither the rich nor women worked enough with broad knowledge gained from calm investigation and objective reasoning to sustain great resolutions.[5]

The comparison of the sexes in the middle rank of life revealed other insights for the environmentalist. He found their paths separated early in life with men being trained for a number of occupations and women only for marriage. Denied access to those pursuits which opened the doors of society, women sacrificed their minds and often legally prostituted their bodies to marry advantageously in the world, wrote Mary Wollstonecraft. Men's constant efforts towards specific objectives

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[5]Wollstonecraft, pp. 63-64, 109.

gave their characters firmness; pleasure was used for relaxation. But women's flabby characters resulted from too much pleasure and too few solid activities in life. Did this prove there was a sex in souls? asked the environmentalist. It would be as rational to declare the French courtiers were not men because the corrupt system of despotism which formed their characters forced them to sacrifice freedom, virtue, and benevolence for pleasure and vanity. Thus the environmentalist traced the reason women had so few attractions beyond that of sex to their circumscribed lives.[6]

Some meshing of thought about the character of woman occurred during this period. Anna Brownell Jameson, an innatist, exemplified this. She found that women exhibited a variety of personalities equal to those displayed by men inspite of the attempts of men and society to force all females into one character by limiting their sphere, experiences, education, and freedom, thus leaving them timid, fearful, and retiring. Society and men reduced all human motives to egotism for the male and vanity for the female; hence their virtues and sentiments were different. The contrary was actually true, explained Jameson. Each sex had the same virtues--courage, bravery, ambition and patriotism--but in different degrees and from different causes. Feminine patriotism arose from her pure sentiments, man's from self-interest. Feminine courage sprang from piety and affection, man's from the animal desire for admiration and applause. She had pity, love, and fear with her ambition, but he had less of these.

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[6]Ibid., pp. 66, 84, 42.

The virtues and sentiments bore the same relationship as the physical bodies of the sexes, she wrote. Both had bodies, but one was stronger than the other. The virtues belonged to both, but women generally had them with less force. The few women of courage, ambition, and patriotism were exceptions instead of the general rule, Jameson concluded. The accomodation made by Jameson became the standard weapon of the innatist against the arguments for environmentally based character in the nineteenth century.[7]

Sensibility and Environmentalism

Sensibility, which the innatists considered the foundation of woman's character, suffered a fate similar to that of her personality at the hands of the environmentalist. The Americans believed this acute emotional awareness made woman particularly susceptible to impressions of shame or praise and slights or kindness. Being extremely sensitive, she responded quickly to feelings of pleasure, pain, gratitude, and violations of propriety. Man, on the other hand, was more aware of bad judgment, poor logic, inadequate reasoning, and unsound arguments. Together, flesh and spirit, they made a perfect whole, a moral person in marriage. Abject as the description appeared, it was the accepted portrait of feminine excellence, said the environmentalist.[8]

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[7]Anna Jameson, Shakespeare's Heroines (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), pp. 11-12, 16-18, 23, 25, 27, 31; Anna Jameson, Lives of Celebrated Female Sovereigns and Illustrious Women, ed. Mary E. Hewitt (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1870), pp. 3, 4; John S. Jenkins, The Heroines of History (Auburn: John E. Beardsley, 1851), theme of the whole book.

[8]Wollstonecraft, pp. 68-69.

Sensibility chained women to wistful emotions, relaxed their mental faculties, and sunk them below the scale of moral excellence by making them overly voluptuous. Restless, anxious, and troublesome, they faithfully followed the contradictory impulses of their overwhelming sensibility. Contemplation played little, if any, role in their deliberations. Under the influence of the heart, they languished in an uncritical acceptance of the opinions of other people. Unstable in conduct, weak in perseverance, their fleeting passions often neutralized each other. Their pampered emotions and neglected judgment blossomed into selfishness, egotism, and superciliousness. The character founded on sensibility forgot one thing, said the environmentalist: ignorance seldom supported virtue for long, and morality vanished without knowledge.[9]

The environmentalists opposed the widely accepted sexual nature of quick discernment, instantaneous compassion, and strong attachments with the Lockean theory of knowledge. People had only the senses to admit the knowledge to the mind. It in turn, with the aid of the feelings, ascertained the goodness or badness of a thing by working it to its logical consequences. How sensitive a person was depended on the amount of attention he paid to these emotions which also helped him to sympathize with the pleasure or pain he perceived in others. Over a period of time, this knowledge of right and wrong emerged as moral truths for mankind and were subject to the only test of validity--experience. Hence sensibility needed the guidance of the

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[9]Ibid.

intellectual faculties to help a person maintain a well-balanced and discriminating course of action.[10]

If sensibility were sexed, Frances Wright argued, all the above would be false. Females would have an entirely different conception of good or bad, pleasure or pain, than males. Nowhere in history could one find dual, but equally binding, morality, she said, Hence, sensibility was an individual rather than a sexual matter.[11]

However, society persistently upheld a double standard of morality for the sexes. What was virtue in man was viewed as vice in woman and vice versa. Modesty, obedience, submission, dependence, beauty, gentleness, forebearance, long suffering, love of dress, the art of society, and reputation were a few of the feminine virtues. According to society, these ill-became a man. He was to practice aggression, command, independence, and similar virtues.[12]

Mary Wollstonecraft threw down her gauntlet and denied the existence of sexual virtues. Either morality was the same for both sexes, she wrote, or it was a relative idea. The double standard of morality which categorized virtues as either feminine or masculine came from man's brain,[13] and woman could overthrow these classifications

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[10]Frances Wright gave the most lucid account of the Lockean view. Frances Wright, Course of Popular Lectures as Delivered by Frances Wright (2d ed., New York: Published at the Office of The Free Enquirer, 1829), pp. 78-79; Wollstonecraft, pp. 68-69.

[11]Wright, pp. 78-79, 117.

[12]Wollstonecraft, p. 57; Wright, pp. 120-122.

[13]Wollstonecraft, p. 57.

without incurring Divine wrath. God had no sympathy with the creations of man, for He had appointed one rule of right to guide the soul to virtue and happiness. Otherwise goodness would lack an eternal foundation. The scriptures upheld one archetype for both sexes when the Bible said neither male nor female existed in Christ, when the Savior expounded the laws of heaven without reference to sex or condition, and when only one set of ten commandments was given. In the beginning, one set of virtues was given to mankind; sexual ones were never mentioned. Then, what was right for man to do was also right for woman, said the environmentalist. The distinction between female and male virtues was an anti-Christian doctrine added to the Christian faith by men.[14]

For those who argued that the stronger physique of man allowed him a greater latitude for virtue, Mary Wollstonecraft reasoned this way. When and if such superiority were proved, the virtues of woman would still have to be of the same quality, else truth was a principle with opposite meanings. Until that time, the conduct of the two sexes required the same principles for guidance, else the artificial sexual character would continue to destroy human character.

Since each individual possessed sensibility, the environmentalist admonished all to develop it fully. As long as it lay dormant in either sex, vicious lessons and bad examples would smother morality in the hot-bed of luxurious indolence. Most important of all, the

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[14]Ibid., pp. 23, 30-31, 40-41, 44, 59; Sarah M. Grimke, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), p. 20; Lydia Maria Child, Letters from New York (1st series, 2d ed.; New York: C. S. Francis and Company, 1844), pp. 245-246.

fictitious double standard would not disappear.[15]

The Sexual Virtues Examined

As if it were not enough to marshall evidence to seriously question the notion of an innate feminine character, the environmentalist assaulted its specific traits. Since the American consensus established sexed modesty as the soil from which the other virtues grew, the environmentalists set out to unsex it, thus discredit the other attributes of the sexual character.

Modesty

Modesty, said the environmentalist, was the soberness of mind which gave a person a just opinion of himself. He never thought too highly of himself but set goals suited to his abilities and tenaciously accomplished them. In such a person reason nurtured modesty and an overstretched sensibility razed it. Hence men in general were more modest than women, wrote Wollstonecraft, for they used their understanding more. The instinctive timidity of rustic shyness and bashfulness, the offspring of ignorance, belonged to another world.[16] Modesty and chastity were not synonymous, said the environmentalist, for too many women who rudely lost their shamefacedness turned to prostitution, and often became audaciously lewd. Only the coyness of ignorance left the mind vacant enough to stimulate such brash behavior. Virtue had

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[15]Wollstonecraft, p. 38; Grimke, pp. 11, 16, 20.

[16]Wollstonecraft, pp. 132-133, 134-137, 183; John Spencer Bassett (ed.), Correspondence of Andrew Jackson (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926-1935), V, 223, 220-221.

more resistance. Another illustration was the immodest behavior of many married women, who, nevertheless, retained worldly honor by being faithful to their husbands. Thus chastity and modesty did not lead to each other.[17]

By making them feminine virtues, society expected a double standard of conduct from the sexes. Men could have debauched minds, entertain with indecent allusions or obscene witticisms without staining their reputations, for chastity was not a masculine virtue. Social custom required women to act with discretion as a sign of chastity, then resist on the most trying occasion the masculine passions they had aroused by displays of sensibility. They were forced to act like a prostitute but refrain from being one. The environmentalist believed these sexual distinctions placed the burden on the shoulders of the weaker sex to uphold morality while they gave men a license for conquest.

Voluptuous men accepted this contest between the virgin and the "gentleman" as the progenitor of modesty, wrote Mary Wollstonecraft. Her instinctive resistance sophisticated her modesty, which he delighted in overcoming with caresses and persuasive words. This imagined warfare subverted morality, for these men soon required bloated affections to satisfy their manly pride. Natural modesty had no appeal to them. When they boasted of a conquest, they described an over-sensitive creature being surprised into folly by man whom society had set up to direct her reason and protect her from error. How ludicrous! The real

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[17]Wollstonecraft, pp. 134, 136.

victory, wrote Wollstonecraft, was over affection not taken by surprise, or over the modest woman who submitted from feelings of love and esteem rather than sensibility.[18]

True modesty belonged to both male and female, she wrote, and self-control had no sex. Women would continue to hide their immodest acts behind a screen of modesty as long as men practiced immorality. Should both sexes practice moderation, men would refrain from outward respect and inward contempt, and women would refuse to feign a coldness of constitution to arouse their passions.[19]

Also the theory of sexual modesty should be extended beyond the intercourse of women and men, said Wollstonecraft. Sisters, female intimates, and attendants learned many "very nasty tricks" with each other's bodies which later made marriage unhappy. This violated the respect which one person owed to another. Dignity was rooted in that modesty which shunned a too intimate mental and physical relationship between human beings, explained Wollstonecraft. Nothing was sexual in a proper reserve between individuals.[20]

Submission, Obedience, and Dependence

Submission, obedience, and dependence fell under environmental censor for the obvious degradation they fostered in women. As the prey of prejudices, credulity, and sensibility, women reasoned from manners

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[18] Ibid., pp. 137-138.

[19] Ibid., pp. 138-139, 143.

[20] Ibid., pp. 139-141.

and acted from authoritarianism. Gallantry was flattery to them and despotism their love. They relished being the peasant to the lord, the private to the general, and the slave in the galley.[21]

The environmentalist believed women were enslaved for the same reason that men of superior abilities submitted to superior strength. They wanted to enjoy the pleasure of the moment with impunity. Take the example of the courtier, wrote one person. Until evidence proved this obsequious male was not a moral agent, it could not be proved that woman was essentially inferior because of her long subordination. The divine right of husbands, like that of kings, rested on the fallacious assertion that women had always been subjected and should continue to be governed thus. The environmentalist suggested that the precept "be pure as your heavenly father" nullified these masculine prerogatives. God, who alone could limit the virtues of either sex, had not only refused to do so but had extolled the soul who had self-dependence and self-direction.[22]

Furthermore, educating women to bow to the will, right or wrong, of another fallible being established a dangerous pattern. Without reason or flexible rules to govern their conduct, their kindness or cruelty depended on the impulse of the moment. Their glee in resting the heavy yoke on weaker shoulders would spread to their servants and children, who would deal similarly with the offspring of the lower classes and pets. Servants would do likewise towards other servants.

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[21] Ibid., pp. 141-142, 28-30.

[22] Ibid., pp. 50, 52, 53.

In a relentless pace the debasement would continue from posterity to posterity making the division of capricious power and dependent relationships an endless tyranny.

If one considered the length of time women had been bullied, wrote one author, it was a miracle so few were able to snap at their chains. Especially since parents dominated the lives of their daughters with a slavish bondage which cramped their mental faculties and withered their human characters. Such arbitrary rule prepared the female for slavery after marriage. If a woman gained any power during marriage, it was by base means; and she ruled in a lawless fashion. Boys also would lose their vigor and industry, said Wollstonecraft, if their spirits were broken by the heavy hand of authority in childhood.[23]

To destroy the rancorous weeds of obedience, dependence, and submission, the environmentalist told parents to look upon themselves as the guide instead of the master of their children and to teach them to obey only in those areas beyond the capacity of their unfolding reason. At maturity the offspring would respect their parents' opinions which coincided with facts and reason. Thus the need for self-abasement would end.[24]

A number of innatists claimed female extremism required subjugation. The environmentalist agreed it would be a problem as long as women were denied the sober fruits of reason. In this respect women differed little from mobs or slaves which indulged in excesses when

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[23] Ibid., pp. 53, 11.

[24] Ibid., pp. 92, 170, 41.

they broke loose from authority. Mankind had to choose between subjecting sensibility in women to either authority or the moderation of reason. The environmentalist chose reason, which was to him what obedience, submission, and dependence were to the innatist.[25]

Desire to Please

The "desire to please" was another feminine virtue in the American mind, noted the environmentalist. This idea made woman kiss the rod which beat her, smile at the injustices she suffered, and caress her husband in the midst of his tyranny. It made too many women pardon an insult to their minds sooner than to their persons. However, as long as her morality rested on expedience, her husband should not trust too implicitely in her servile obedience, claimed the environmentalist. Should she be unable to please him, she might use her winning sweetness to find a lover. Should the fear of the world or the torments of hell restrain this desire to please other men, she would be left unemployed. Long ruled by vanity and fixed habits, she would have no substitute for this awful privation.[26] Yet too many women failed to realize boredom followed satiation and familiarity and that later in life, they would complain in vain of their husbands' indifference and inability to exchange his old fondness for her body for her nonexistent mind. How asinine the "to please" philosopher, Rousseau, appeared to the environmentalist. He told women to absolutely obey her husband, and to reflect if she hoped to entertain him once he had finished with

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[25] Ibid., p. 91.

[26] Ibid., pp. 91, 93.

her body.[27] How could she reflect who had no mind? asked the environmentalist.

Beauty

People justified the sexual virtue of beauty on the grounds it was purely feminine and enhanced woman's ability to attract and please men, said the environmentalist. However, woman differed very little from men in this respect, said Wollstonecraft. Napoleon Bonaparte rivaled Madame de Stael in personal vanity, and the concern of Alexander Pope and Lord Byron over their physical deformities would make a maiden blush.[28]

Wollstonecraft related she had seen women so enamored with beauty they failed to understand the respect due to every human being. They would scold a man for beating a weary horse which balked under a heavy load or shed tears for an animal in a trap, then moments later force their coachmen and horses to wait for hours in a storm while they attended to inconsequential matters. They nursed sick dogs in their own beds with a parade of affection but left their children to grow up crooked in a cramped nursery. Their lap-dog rested on their bosoms more than their offspring. Indeed this French-phrase lisping, factitious character with fair face and empty mind swallowed up the wife, mother, and human creature.[29]

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[27] Ibid., pp. 112, 97.

[28] Ibid., pp. 47, 50, 61, 71, 127.

[29] Ibid., pp. 113, 191.

The environmentalist wanted every woman to acquire the moral loveliness which neither insulted humanity by consulting the comforts of the brute creation first or sweetly wasted life away expecting to be valued by men after beauty had faded. This standard of beauty had nothing to do with the fads of beauty and fashion. It made some men as handsome and far more beautiful than some women. Thus in the broad sense of the words, there was an absolute beauty of symmetry not restricted to either sex and a relative beauty--relative to the time of the sexual impulse to attract the other for the purposes of procreation. The environmentalist opposed confusing the two.[30]

Love of Dress

The prevalent notion of woman's love of dress fell under the ban of the environmentalist who believed her fondness of dress arose, like false ambition in men, from a love of power. Otherwise one had to prove the pre-existent soul had loved apparel and brought the inclination into its earthly body. During the impulse for procreation, coquettish dress appeared in both sexes, said the environmentalists, but before the physiological change, it sometimes appeared prematurely as a result of the improper love of finery instilled in girls by their mothers. Later in life, the attention and the power derived therefrom reinforced these early notions.[31]

The environmentalists called Rousseau's advice to women pure

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[30]Ibid., p. 163; Brown, pp. 74-76.

[31]Wollstonecraft, p. 47.

sophistry when he said they should dress very modestly but coquettish enough in appearance that the eyes and affections of man wandered uncontrollably over her entire person. He told the discreet woman to put her apparel together in such a way that it stimulated the imagination of man. No stretch of the imagination, exclaimed the environmentalist, could make such a dress style modest which prepared woman for immorality.

However, Rousseau was not totally at fault according to the environmentalist. Society, enamored with beauty and the show of wealth, judged woman's character by her appearance and man's by his property and conduct. Custom forbid woman to live independent of man and decreed she should not choose until chosen. Marriage was the only way to preferment, therefore she was justified in using means established by custom to attract masculine attention and sustain his interest. He, likewise. Beauty joined with modest conduct sufficed for her character and social position; wealth for him.[32]

Using anthropological evidence, one environmentalist declared the love of dress was a relative thing. One would expect an inherent virtue of this sort to make the particular garb of each sex readily distinguishable by a visitor to a foreign land. According to travel accounts, the natives in "remote" nations differed far less in dress than did men and women in the United States. In fact, the difference was hardly perceptible in some nations. Even history revealed a strong inclination for external adornment in primitive states, but the men,

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[32]Ibid., pp. 8-9, 28, 207.

not the women, practiced the art. Negro slaves--male and female--loved finery; white servants of both sexes prided themselves on the costliness of their apparel. A large, respectable class of men--dandies--also made clothing their trade mark. The environmentalist believed woman's fondness for dress arose from custom and that the personal vanity of the two sexes differed less than people imagined.[33]

Usefulness and beauty were proposed by the environmentalist as the standards to evaluate any mode of feminine dress. If only beauty were consulted, he said, the differences in individual attire would be trivial. Variations would undoubtedly exist, for the varying acquaintance people had with the external world would give them different emotional attachments to this or that color. But should utility and beauty clash, the preference should go to the former. Need or an occupation determined the superior dress, but the environmentalist thought it would be strange if the practical and attractive failed to coincide. Furthermore, the similarity of people suggested the style which suited one would suit all or the garb which proved most convenient to one person for walking or sitting should be suited to all.[34]

With the sexual nature playing no role in the selection of garments, the environmentalist proposed equality of dress for woman

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[33]William Dunlap, The Life of Charles Brockden Brown, Together with Selections from the Rarest of his Printed Works, from his Original Letters, and from his Manuscripts before Unpublished (Philadelphia: James P. Parker, 1815, on microfilm, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1963), p. 80; Wollstonecraft, pp. 206-207; Lydia Maria Child, The Progress of Religious Ideas Through Successive Ages (New York: C. S. Francis and Company, 1855), II, 209; Grimke, p. 67.

[34]Dunlap, pp. 80-81.

and man. If a task called for a special costume or uniform, it, like the tools of the occupation, would be assumed. When a person changed from one scene to another, he would change to the proper dress. The same outfit would not be worn at all times. Each person would exchange his tools and uniform of the shop, farm, or woods for that appropriate dress when he visited the town hall, opera, or restaurant.[35]

The first overt attempt to include practical, but pleasant, clothing among the natural rights of woman came in the late 1840's when Elizabeth Smith Miller designed the first reform garment which, due to the audacious action of Amelia Jenks Bloomer, set the nation on its ear. She wore the garment in the streets of Seneca Falls, New York, and the "right-minded" citizens considered it the scandal of the century. The newspapers rewarded her display by naming the garment after her: bloomers. This incident proved to be one in a series of radical dress proposals by women.[36]

The Art of Society

The art of society could hardly be peculiar to women, observed the environmentalists. Men, like the courtiers and rich, made it their lifetime occupation. Indeed the social graces reached their apex in France under the assiduous guidance of Louis XIV, and in England, no woman matched the social sagacity of Lord Chesterfield or his insistence on boys learning the art of society.

The environmentalist found little to his liking in a female

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[35] Ibid., p. 181.

[36] Wollstonecraft, pp. 141-142; Grimke, p. 72.

virtuoso of gentility. Conscious of the ever watchful eye of mankind, she paid the strictest attention to her words, gestures, dress, manners, and deportment. She learned a habitual regard for every circumstance and performed the smallest duties with the utmost propriety in order to maintain her reputation, rise in society, and gain a husband. Vacuity of mind and heartlessness made a young lady affect graces before indolent, debauched men, or, in the case of a wife, to dissipate her husband's patrimony in unnecessary expenses. This social diletante chattered for hours in light, sparkling chit-chat according to complicated rules of feminine conversation.[37] She was obliged to deny without giving offense and evasively encourage hope without lying which encouraged cunning liciviousness and politeness to sport with truth. She was expected to accomodate her behavior to the tone of the group, which suggested to the environmentalist an endless number of rules of etiquette. With insincerity and falsehood governing the character, the art of society could never spawn a great mind. Drowned in the sea of little daily incidents, she naturally turned to sly tricks, fits of rage, or false jealousy to wrestle a concession from her husband. The environmentalist reverted to his standard solution: the broadening of opportunities for woman would free her from these chains. Otherwise virtue was an affair of convention, and women had to have a nature suited to authoritarian rules not strictly deductible from truth.[38]

Debutantism institutionalized the societal demand for personal

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[37]Wollstonecraft, pp. 27, 62-63, 66, 108; Grimke, pp. 46-47, 48, 66.

[38]Wollstonecraft, pp. 95, 144, 187-188.

veneer. A marriageable miss was displayed on the auction block at the various functions of society where her external glow could touch the senses. "Coming out" absorbed all the thoughts and efforts of these shrivalled souls whose parade of sensibility camouflaged their cold artificial feelings as they fluttered at large in the giddy circles which decided their life's fate, wrote Wollstonecraft. Here the art of dissimulation proved its mettle. No man was ever discouraged, but a woman never fell in love until a man with a superior fortune proposed marriage.[39]

The equivocal machinations of the art of society inextricably led to the degrading art of conquest which pitted the intellect of man against the feeling of woman. The great challenge to man in this game of the sexes was to overcome the instinctive resistance of modesty; that of feminine resistance to bring out the full potential of the mind of man. While she used the gleaming treasure of accomplishments and beauty to draw the besieger on, he maneuvered with sweet words, officious attentions, promises frothy with anticipation, and declarations of her irresistible charm. By these techniques, Lord Chesterfield had gained the hearts of twenty females for the sport of conquest and, like too many women, labored with heroic endeavor to win hearts merely to spurn them in disgust after the victory.[40]

The environmentalist found the results of this art of seduction to vary. Single women who succumbed, occasionally married their

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[39]Ibid., pp. 83, 103, 108, 188.

[40]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

seducers, but more often were cast into the streets by their parents to become prostitutes. Married women discreetly protected their reputations, hence retained their positions in society. Yet in the prime of life, some women gained power by playing on the passions of men and became capricious tyrants on account of their childish impulses and selfish vanity. The numerous historical examples of mischief which came from the private intrigues of mistresses convinced the environmentalist of the insane consequences of the art of conquest. In many countries the luxurious despots had been the men, but the crafty ministers of states who wielded illicit sway were women. An especially notorious example was the reign of Louis XIV when his mistresses made Europe quake with their sudden flights of folly. Vile and foolish women, concluded the environmentalist, would always gather in this power as long as men were slaves to their appetites.[41]

However, the environmentalist gave the lover poetic license to vent his bubbling passion for his sweetheart, and gave her the liberty to use her sensibility to excite his emotions. In this they practiced no falsehood, for the artless impulse of nature which sprang from a desire to gratify the heart instead of vanity was not calculated coquetry. Each sought to convince the other that he caressed the individual and not the sex. Happy would it be for the wife, wrote Wollstonecraft, if the man who loved her did so from an impassioned heart instead of the senses.[42] Then love would not degenerate into

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[41] Ibid., pp. 51, 62, 185.

[42] Ibid., pp. 63, 104-105, 106, 109.

selfish personal gratification which undermined the character of both.

The insidious warfare of the sexes separated the interests of the sexes by the cold unmeaning social intercourse covered with sexual gallantry. Morality fell by the wayside and women were rendered vain, useless, and wretched. Until more reasonable and affectionate rules of conduct guided the art of society, explained the environmentalist, virtue would be a goal to overthrow rather than maintain.[43]

Passionate Love

Because Americans believed woman was closer to the animals in the great scale of being, they considered her character colored to a great extent by animalism or passionate love. She might have less sexual capacity than man but more fire. Too much had been made of this trait for the environmentalist not to examine it. The transitory nature of passionate love, the fact that familiarity put out the glow, was what really disturbed the innatist. Thus he sought for a panacea to keep it alive, said the environmentalist.

One technique which tried to stabilize the passions had the wife hide the extent of her sensibility and affection from her husband. The suspense and difficulties would challenge his masculinity and intensify his passion by drawing his mind out of its stupor. His pride would do the rest. The environmentalist pointed to the absurdity of such voluptuous precautions. In the attempt to overcome her feigned lethergy, many a husband seduced his wife as he would a common prostitute.[44]

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[43] Ibid., p. 107.

[44] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

Rendered licentious by these sophisticated animal urges while still handsome, she would not be content to be a superior servant after her husband's instinct had faded, especially if she had been treated as a goddess. Economically dependent, she would nurture a kind of feline affection and purr about any man who would feed and caress her. Even when a sense of duty or fear of shame restrained this desire of pleasing, she would obstinately try to love. In the end she would become the abject wooer or sensual slave, the part she had forced her husband to play earlier in life. Too few sentiments would exist between them to make the union binding once either party proved unable to satisfy the animal urges of the other.

Women, who were trained to believe passionate love was their special realm, naturally preferred the playboy to the sensible man. Taught always to discern the character of a person through his manners, a man with awkward ways, an insipid conversation, seeming impotency, and rational compliments made ridiculous impressions on them. They were captivated by the lover, the protector, bravery prostrate to beauty, and the superficially accomplished man. Since a person could not correctly evaluate qualities beyond his comprehension, reasoned the environmentalist, little fault should be placed on woman for choosing the rake over the gentleman.[45]

Either friendship or indifference inevitably succeeded burned out animal passions. The environmentalist admonished married couples to bring their passions under control as soon as possible and regulate

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[45] Ibid., pp. 129, 128.

their lives by a friendship which would be dissolved only by death. In this way those emotions which monopolized the thoughts and often disrupted society would be turned into more useful paths. Then the free reign of reason would turn the animal urges into compassionate tenderness, and women would live in a state like most men, no longer engrossed in passionate love.[46]

It seemed to the environmentalist that talented wives would successfully challenge the courtesans, for the more virtue and taste men acquired the more they looked for these in women. With an improved character, wives could give more meaning to the soft playfulness of life and retain their throne after passion had declined. In the end, they would gain an empire of equality where once women had ruled for only a few years. Indeed, the character was low in the scale of beings whose virtue and understanding failed to give a human appearance to animal appetites.

With the true purpose of passionate love restored, young men would choose wives from motives of affection, and maidens would love from the heart. He would cease to debauch his sentiments and weaken his constitution by visits to the prostitute, for the procreational and emotional values of marriage would be foremost in his mind. With the friendship of her husband secure, wanton arts would no longer compete with the children for her time. But warned the environmentalist, it was vain to expect the wife to exchange the looking-glass for the nursery while her husband neglected his duty as a father. She wanted the power

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[46]Ibid., pp. 81, 35-36, 193.

which justly belonged to her, and when she could not enjoy it, she rendered both sexes vicious in an effort to gain even some of these privileges. All this could be prevented by a more equitable development of character, said the environmentalist.[47]

Reputation

The environmentalist accused the innatist of undermining morality by making reputation a sexual virtue of women. Left to the mercy of public opinion which judged by how well the proprieties were honored, they were forced to keep the varnish of the character fresh. An insipid decency emaciated their souls by sacrificing justice to propriety in the name of convenience, thus encrusting the substance of morality. Equivocal circumstances were the cause of this. The environmentalist told women to forego the circumspection demanded by society and walk down the narrow path prescribed by heaven even if it violated some "decorous prejudices." Modesty would not be lost, for a clean heart and reason never were offensive. Should they seek the favor of God, they would seldom live by erroneous values or bring their reputations into disrepute.[48]

Furthermore, the environmentalist condemned the inextricable connection of reputation and chastity which made honor the measure of her goodness. As long as she maintained her chastity every social and domestic duty could be neglected for gaming, parties, vanity and

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[47] Ibid., pp. 113, 193-194, 12.

[48] Ibid., pp. 108, 114, 148-149.

general dissipation, without damaging her character. However, the sexual character of reputation did not extend to man. After indulgence in vice, he returned to virtue and respectability, but the same privilege was not extended to woman. Her chastity once lost was lost forever, and reputation followed it. Nevertheless, should the loss of chastity remain a secret, her reputation was safe. Too many people viewed the loss of feminine chastity as the end of a woman's reputation, but not so for man. As much as she valued a chaste reputation, he despised it. Both extremes proved equally destructive to morality, said the environmentalist.[49]

Sexual reputation and chastity, or the double standard of morality, produced institutionalized prostitution by giving men a license to prey on innocent girls. Once victimized by masculine deception and their desire to please their admirers, they entered infamy imagining they had lost all when they lost their honor. Turned out of doors without a means of support by the venomous rancor of their own sex and parents, who believed the loss radically depraved the entire character, the young girl found prostitution her only refuge. No exertion could overcome the chastity fixation of society and rectify her mistake or restore her former station in life. Unless she possessed an uncommon set of values buttressed by courage, explained the environmentalist, these sordid circumstances would drive her into the ranks of the very dregs of society.[50]

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[49] Ibid., pp. 144, 146, 80, 150.

[50] G. W. Montgomery, Illustrations of the Law of Kindness (Stereotype ed.; New York: C. L. Stickney, 1844), p. 153. Wollstonecraft, p. 79.

Necessity made prostitution the business of too many women to suit the environmentalist, but never that of man. Lacking in economic skills, the seduced naturally turned to infamy while the more fortunate ones legally exchanged their persons for economic gifts through marriage. The chances to preserve a reputation could be infinitely increased, said the environmentalist, by making a woman's character depend on the observation of all the virtues, de-emphasizing her animalism and giving her economic independence. The loss of one virtue should never be allowed to overshadow all the others, especially for those who were degraded without their consent.[51]

The anger of the environmentalist fell on more than the lack of chastity in men. It excoriated those women with "snow-white" reputations who repudiated the victims of the libertine's unholy appetites while smiling on his antics. Women, wrote one author, seldom became entirely abandoned until they were forced into a state of desperation by the invidious animosity of their own sex. Nature never created a woman that frail!

Those who justified prostitution as a means to save the majority of women also drew fire from the environmentalist who considered it ignoble to use a small evil to sanction a greater good. The mischief did not stop there, said the environmentalist, it leavened. Those inexorably consigned to harlotry soon lured husbands away from home, debauched sons, and forced even modest women to adopt some of their ways. Thus the moral character of the female sex gradually settled into

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[51]Wollstonecraft, pp. 79, 152.

a bottomless mire.[52]

Two practical plans were proposed to deal with the problem. Mary Wollstonecraft favored a legal arrangement to force men into a left-handed marriage to maintain the women they seduced and their children. Neither should such women be termed wives, else it would subvert the meaning of marriage, nor the men be given any marital privileges, for that would institute polygamy. The system would continue as long as women lacked mental training, had to rely upon men for a subsistence, and the selfishness of man prevented a union of hearts. Margaret Fuller suggested a council of matrons to pass on the qualifications of every young man before admitting him into the presence of their daughters and general society.[53]

Public Virtue

Last of all, the environmentalist advocated the belief that public virtue was an aggregation of private virtue. Neither male nor female could violate any sacred duty by calling it a virtue of one sex and not binding on the other without damaging public virtue. When the bond between the sexes, whether as citizens, husbands, wives, or parents, was one of selfish convenience, public morality became a relative thing. It was vain to expect public and private goodness to coincide until the factitious sentiments disappeared which were rooted in sexual virtues

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[52] Ibid., pp. 150-153.

[53] Ibid., pp. 78, 152-153; Margaret Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men. Woman versus Women," The Dial, IV (July 1843), 38.

and the double standard of conduct, he said.[54]

When the environmentalist vanquished sexual virtues, he started a movement to eliminate the derogatory system which generally exalted the lower propensities of human nature during the social relations of the sexes. By forcing the sexes to approach each other as male and female, woman's animal nature was exalted and her moral and intellectual nature relegated to oblivion. The revolution called for the sexes to meet each other as human beings possessing individual minds and spirits. The environmentalist called on women to rise from the degradation in which men had placed them and claim those sacred, inalienable rights which belonged to every moral and rational creature.[55]

The New Image

The disrepute which the environmentalist brought on the old ideal image of woman made a new image imperative. If women knew what they were, where they were going, and how to get there, all relations with men would then be harmonized. Secondly, men had an ideal image, however imperfectly described, to imitate, but no lamp shone brightly for women.

The prototype of woman had often been forcibly represented through the ages, wrote Margaret Fuller, but the minds of men, clouded by the mists of sensuality and routine, quickly lost the concept. Only the priest, artist, and poet had clarified and preserved any notion of

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[54]Wollstonecraft, pp. 153, 137, 212.

[55]Grimke, pp. 22-24, 26; Brown, p. 83; Wollstonecraft, p. 63.

feminine perfection. The sharpness of the vision also suffered from the appearance of the fictitious model of the innatist. For the environmentalist the 1840's was an auspicious time to redraw the mores of masculinity and femininity.[56]

The exemplary female was the temple of an immortal mind and heart which relished all the virtues. Equally ingenious and fruitful in resources, she reacted to hardships the same as men. The toil of government, industry, agriculture, commerce, and education received her support, and she was equally at home in literary or scientific endeavors. She perpetuated the human race as a child of the spirit not as an anomaly of nature created only for this purpose. A dignified sense of self-discipline made her affectionate without hyperbol and intellectual without coldness. All adversity was met with outward serenity and inward stability. Her religion awakened her soul to sublime aspirations. Freed from the harassment of man-made rules and laws, she unfolded her rule from within. Mere accomplishment and personal veneer were unnecessary guides of behavior. She lived and shared natural rights with man and developed the qualities of energy and harmony in conjunction with beauty, intellect, and love. Equal in every way with him, she gained his high esteem and that of her own sex.[57]

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[56]Margaret Fuller, The Writings of Margaret Fuller, ed. Mason Wade (New York: Viking Press, 1941), pp. 122, 115-116; Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Tribune Press, 1845), pp. 20, 22.

[57]Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 15-16; /Judith Sargent Stevens Murray/, The Gleaner (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1798), III, 198, 200-217, in EAI no. 34162.

Conclusion

By mid-nineteenth century, the woman's movement added a non-sexual character to its belief in the environmentally-shaped nature of woman, the humanness of her physique, and the equality of her mind. By rational arguments, it unsexed the character traits of modesty, obedience, submission, dependence, beauty, love of dress, desire to please, the art of society, passionate love, chastity, and reputation. Each person was to develop all virtues; it was his moral duty. The division of virtues between the sexes firmly convinced the environmentalist that society was wandering far from the natural and, of course, rational order of life. When he proposed an alternate ideal image for woman, he raised the spectre of societal revolution. The "new woman" concept called upon mankind to do its most difficult task--to change its deep-seated emotional attachments to certain ideas of right and wrong. As the north star had guided the Viking ships, the "new woman" image promised to guide her to a new life.

CHAPTER XIII

THE IMPACT OF HISTORY ON THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENT

Supporters of the woman's movement looked at the world and wondered why society everywhere violated the meaning and implications of environmentalism. They turned to the past for the answer and for the needed facts and episodes to back up their rational arguments, evidence which was practically absent in the learned disciplines of the day. Meager, indeed, was the support offered by philosophy, psychology, science, medicine, and the less strenuous fields of knowledge.

Furthermore, they needed to counter the innatist's use of historical evidence to substantiate his claims of the inferiority of women. Most of his evidence, said the environmentalist, was, at best, equivocal. Thus, smarting under the burden of the past, he produced a broad interpretation of history which laid the basis for the flowering of the ideology and activism of the woman's movement.

The historical view of the woman's movement began with the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Using the methods and findings of higher criticism, especially that of textual criticism, one woman discovered two versions of the creation. In the first account, God created "<u>them</u>" not "<u>him</u>". Both sexes reflected the image of God and received dominion over the earth, but not over each other. The

commandment to multiply, replentish, and subdue the earth lacked any connotation of sexual subordination whatsoever.[1] Created in equality, no particle of difference existed between them. The second account was mainly about the creation of woman, Sarah Grimke said. The earth swarmed with creatures capable of loving, obeying, and looking up to man; hence there was no need to create another species of this kind. Man needed a companion who was equal to him in all respects, a free agent endowed with intellect and immortality who could share his thoughts, dreams, and feelings from choice instead of instinct. If woman had been created inferior to man, she would never have been his partner in life or that helpmate "like unto himself."[2] Another woman suggested that the theory of the creation of woman from a rib of man bordered on fantasy, and any person who gave it much thought would see its ridiculousness.[3]

The blissful state in the Garden of Eden ended when Eve, under the influence of a supernatural being, disobeyed the commandment of God by eating the "apple." When Adam fell, he displayed as much weakness as, if not more than, Eve, for he was not carried away by the logic of a satanic influence. His ready acquiescence to Eve's proposal convinced the environmentalist of the falseness of man's claim to superiority based on the priority of her transgression. When both fell from

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[1]Sarah M. Grimke, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), p. 4; Genesis 1: 24-28 as used by Grimke.

[2]Grimke, pp. 4-5, 23; Genesis 1:18-25 as used by Grimke.

[3]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), pp. 30-31.

innocence and happiness, they remained equal. The responsibility for the Fall, then rested equally on the shoulders of both male and female.[4]

The environmentalist searched the story of the Fall for indications of any moral and intellectual distinction between woman and man. Instead he found each retained his moral responsibilities, intellectual powers, and immortal souls, thus making each accountable to God for the use of his talents. Standing side by side on the same platform, each recognized God as the only superior Being.[5]

However, the fall of man set in motion a historical process known as the struggle of the sexes. The animal and intellectual natures locked in a long battle for supremacy, the consequences of which God foresaw and foretold. He said to woman that man would rule over her by brute force. Christian divines had long interpreted this passage as a curse, explained Grimke, when in reality it was a simple prophecy. Drawing on philology, she explained that the Hebrew and French languages expressed "shall" and "will" with the same word. The male translators of the Scriptures whose culture taught them to exercise lordship over their wives naturally used shall instead of will. Thus the prediction addressed to Eve was perverted into an obligation to Adam to rule over

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[4]Grimke, pp. 6-7, 9-10, 115-116. To back up her view, she used Isaiah 42: 27, Romans 5: 12, II Cor. 11: 3, and I Tim. 2: 14.

[5]Grimke, pp. 7-9. Hannah Mather Crocker, who combined both innate and environmental positions, said woman lost her original equality as punishment for her part in the Fall. For her, the struggle of the sexes had nothing to do with this loss as, later, Christianity had restored the "original equality" or mental capacities. Moral and physical differences still remained. Hannah Mather Crocker, Observations on the Real Rights of Women (Boston, 1818), pp. 5-6. See also Emma Willard, A System of Universal History in Perspective (Hartford: F. J. Huntington, 1835), p. 10.

his wife.[6]

The first struggle of the sexes left woman subordinated as God had predicted. In the absence of other intelligent beings, she became the first victim of his lust for dominion. Then he went beyond the prophecy of God and degraded and enslaved woman. Once he had confined her to the domestic circle, he spread the poison of slavery to his neighbors whom he organized into kingdoms and enmeshed in artificial ranks and honors. The same unhallowed passion led Cain to murder Abel and Nimrod to be a mighty hunter of men. By diligent effort, the pestilence was soon spread over the face of the known world.[7]

Although Jehovah foretold the temporary ascendency of men, He had not predicted the inequality of woman forever.[8] After the flood, the former grant of dominion was reiterated to man. But the prophecy of his triumph in the struggle of the sexes was not renewed. No passage placed woman under the guidance of her "brother." If Jehovah had surrendered to man His prerogative to be her guardian, teacher, and instructor, He surely would have given evidence of it. His commandment to Noah, as in the rest of Biblical history, was for woman and man to serve only the Lord God.[9]

After the flood, man renewed the contest with woman which

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[6]Grimke, p. 7; Genesis 3: 16 as used by Grimke.

[7]Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin, a Dialogue (a type-facsimile reprint of the 1st edition printed in 1798; New Haven: Carl & Margaret Rollins, 1935), p. 43; Grimke, p. 11.

[8]Grimke, p. 7.

[9]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

varied with each nation until the coming of Christ. In Israel, Sarah obeyed Abraham and acknowledged his sway by calling him Lord. Eleazur bartered for the hand of Rebecca for Isaac with incense, ear-rings, and bracelets instead of approaching her as a dignified being who would occupy an important place in the life of his master. The practice of concubinage and polygamy which the cupidity of Abraham and other important men of the world introduced made women property. Men bought and sold them like cattle or sheep without regard for their sacred right of preference. By the time of Solomon, the chattel value of woman was so great, he laid down the standards by which each man could evaluate his property.[10]

Moses institutionalized polygamy by giving it legal sanction. Besides giving women little or no voice in Israel, the law of Moses forbade them to exercise their extra-sensory powers under ban of death--no witch, he said, should live in Israel.[11] Although women were excluded from the priesthood which was given to the descendants of Aaron, they participated in the prophetic tradition. Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah were prophets in Israel.[12]

In India, reading and learning were feminine taboos, and many dreadful stories circulated about the disasters which befell those who violated the interdictions. The Devedasses, women dedicated to service in the temple from childhood, received scant instruction in reading,

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[10] Ibid., p. 12.

[11] Ibid., p. 89; Crocker, p. 22.

[12] Grimke, p. 101.

writing, dancing, singing, and playing musical instruments to help them light lamps, sing, dance and do other ceremonies connected with temple worship. The mass of women received less salubrious treatment. Considered voluptuous, they were never allowed to think or act for themselves. Their moral and intellectual powers slumbered in inactivity which left their characters shallow and feeble. Indian treatment of women was typical of Asian countries, wrote Lydia Maria Child.[13]

In other lands women fared a little better. The Queen of Sheba gained enough power and wisdom to match wits with Solomon. In Greece, women ordinarily pursued domestic tasks. However, a number of them received the Grecian priesthood, for men considered them endowed with an intermediate substance between the body and rational soul. As they generally became the mediums through which the Greek Gods revealed their will, the people paid great respect to them, especially to the priestess of the Delphic oracle. Farther north, the Celtic tribes considered men and women equal. The Teutonic people believed their women were preeminent in supernatural power, hence allowed them equal participation in religious ceremonies and important matters of state. These women also fought with equal bravery in battle. Whereas the eastern lands had ten prophets to every prophetess, the ratio in the Celtic nations was far higher. Asiatic servitude and Roman profligacy were unknown to them.

The Roman treatment of women lingered far behind that of the Teutonic tribes although they had an order of priestesses called Vestal

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[13]Lydia Maria Child, The Progress of Religious Ideas Through Successive Ages (New York: C. S. Francis and Company, 1855), I, 110, 377; Grimke, p. 38.

Virgins. Across the Mediterranean, the Egyptians restrained women from the pleasing arts which softened and relaxed the mind on the basis they would be disqualified from managing the affairs of trade and commerce. The delicacy of sex encouraged by surrounding nations ill-suited the Egyptian women who generally enjoyed the same occupations as the men. Here the judgment of the female sex never went begging.[14]

With a few exceptions, argued the environmentalist, women suffered harshly at the hands of man prior to the advent of the Christian dispensation which restored them to their original equality. By a woman bringing the Savior of mankind into the world, all womankind was redeemed from the charge of betraying and debasing the human race. Margaret Fuller energetically accused the current belief which attributed the withering of mankind to a curse laid on woman of failing to appreciate the fact that the "new Adam" (Christ) brought redemption from the Fall through woman. Woman, she argued, could not have been cursed by God if He chose the female sex to bring forth His Son.[15]

The history of woman underwent an important change after the death of Christ, stated Sarah Grimke. Although Christ gave His precepts without reference to either sex, some of the disciples, especially St. Paul gave man the intellectual and emotional advantage in the struggle

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[14]Child, I, 300, 377, II, 176-177, III, 412; Crocker, p. 27.

[15]Lydia Maria Child, Brief History of the Condition of Women in Various Ages and Nations (rev. and cor. 5th ed.; New York, 1845), vol. I and II; Margaret Fuller, The Writings of Margaret Fuller, ed. Mason Wade (New York: Viking Press, 1941), p. 167; Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Tribune Press, 1845), p. 18; Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (New York: George Long, 1813), II, 20.

of the sexes by making the husband the head of the wife, by pronouncing her as made for him, and by giving him the image and glory of God. Women, he relegated to the likeness and celebrity of the male. For centuries, claimed the environmentalist, men had returned to St. Paul's historical statements to prove masculine superiority and to justify all necessary means to subject the female to their use, help, and comfort. One writer ironically suggested Jehovah should revise the first commandment to conform with the advice of St. Paul. It would read: man should have no gods before Jehovah, but woman should have no gods before Man.[16]

Furthermore, St. Paul labored as much under the Asiatic prejudices respecting women as St. Peter and the apostles had about uncleanness of the Gentiles, wrote several authors. Historical evidence proved the New Testament passages on women were more the customs and traditions governing women in that era than commandments from Jehovah. For example, St. Paul drew his prohibition against women speaking in the church from the Jews who refused to let a woman read or speak in the synagogue. The common practice in eastern countries of forcing a dishonored or enslaved person to be veiled or covered led him to have women cover their heads in church. Men commonly wore their hair short; St. Paul told women they dishonored themselves by cutting their hair.[17]

Textual criticism revealed some of St. Paul's instructions, which

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[16]Grimke, pp. 1-6, 90-94; Thomas Smith Grimke, Reflections on the Character and Objects of all Science and Literature (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, 1831), pp. 88-89, 107.

[17]Sarah Grimke, pp. 16, 91-92. See I Cor. 11: 5; Child, Progress of Religious Ideas, II, 197; Wendell Phillips, Speeches, Lectures, and Letters (2d series; Boston: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company, 1891), p. 125.

were addressed to special groups of Christians, were no longer applicable in the nineteenth century. The conduct of Christian converts who were married to "heathen" companions taxed St. Paul's administrative ability. The dislike of husbands for their wives who clung to heathenism or wives who assumed moral and religious superiority over their pagan husbands threatened the internal peace of the infant church. Men eventually made this solution to a local problem a universal law of God.[18]

The masculine lust for dominion gradually forced women from the offices of the church. Inspite of the renewal of equality by the Savior, His followers set out to subjugate women by elevating local practices to divine pronouncements. Thus early in the Christian era, the principles atrophied which would have raised women to a higher level of existence.

In succeeding decades, men found religion an extremely effective weapon against women, wrote the female historians. They deliberately altered passages to suit themselves, and subsequent men wrote commentaries on these passages. The Church Fathers and the many Christian sects in general perpetuated the blunders of the apostles in their doctrines and practices. The Christian Fathers, drawing from Jewish rabbis, Indian devotees, and Egyptian ascetics, almost universally came to consider that matter (earth) had a feminine nature and the origin of evil. By attracting heavenly souls downward, it ensnared them in visible forms or bodies. Especially the Jews and Christian Fathers saw the "First Mother" introduce sin into the world by enticing the "First

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[18]Sarah Grimke, p. 95.

Father" down from his heavenly abode. The latter extended this view to make marriage an impediment to holiness. Those who came to believe the pathway to holiness and salvation could be completely closed by a close association with a woman made it a holy duty to remain unmarried in order to devote themselves more fully to God. Mani, an important Gnostic, claimed the Spirits of Darkness were jealous of the Spirits of Light. They created a spirit of darkness, Eve, and bestowed all their meager brightness on her in an attempt to attract Adam to unite part of his glory with her lesser quality and light. By this means they hoped to acquire the brightness of their protagonists. Bardesanes, Philo, Nazarene, and Cabalists saw the feminine principle as inferior to the masculine principle on the earth. By the sixth century, the Eastern Religions and Mohammedanism had similar views on women, wrote the environmentalist.[19]

The gradual fall of the Roman Empire accentuated the masculine passion for conquest throughout Europe. The will of the strongest was the criterion of right. Walled cities, castles, and other fortification became necessary, and the weak gladly submitted to any service to gain access to them. Feudalism emerged from these trying times. In this military arrangement, women lost their right to inherit land, for the warlords needed a "military tenant" who could leave the plow to defend the fortress. At a later date, an inheritance passed to women if they would provide a stipulated monetary resource in place of military forces. In other ways they suffered even more severely. The daughters

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[19]Child, Progress of Religious Ideas, II, 351-353, 402-404, 394, 411, III, 304, 413.

of nobles lived in perpetual danger of being carried off by roving marauders or by ambitious men whose armies overran their father's castle. The victors forced them into marriage without even pretending to consult their inclinations.[20]

As the Middle Ages advanced, the age of chivalry appeared which radically changed the situation of the ladies of nobility while the mass of women remained totally subjected to their husbands or the lord of the manor. A profound homage was paid to these few women as if they were divine. A chaste relationship of the sexes and unselfish service to others fructified from the sacred principles of chivalry, wrote Lydia M. Child. Not all ladies succumbed to the romantic etiquette of chivalry, however. Its militant spirit fascinated women like the wife of Edward the Third, Countess of Mountfort, Countess of March, the wife of the Prince of Romagna, Lagertha, Marguerite, Joan of Arc, and Margaret of Anjou. These females fought with the same ferocity as men.

In spite of the widespread chivalrous elevation of a few women, celibacy continued to be the closest road to heaven. The eucharist was considered too holy to be touched by female hands; a white linen glove covered the hand which received it.[21]

A ludicrous mania for renown accompanied the decline of the original ideas of chivalry. Knighthood lost its appreciation for high-minded virtues which could now be easily purchased or taken by force. The errant turned to professional soldiery or committed violence and

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[20] Ibid., II, 86-88.

[21] Ibid., II, 93, 116, 118, 120-124.

robbery in his meandering search for adventure. The troubadour and crusader offered him moral support in his debased profligacy, and women departed from the modesty which had been the object of masculine veneration. Smiles and freedoms were given indiscriminately.

Lydia Maria Child let the reader of her history laugh at the grotesque form of chivalry in its death frenzy, but wished its true spirit never to be forgotten. As a legal code, it had stood between women and lawlessness and raised the idea of woman to a moral position in society which even the most refined nations of antiquity had never known. Furthermore, the female never completely lost this rank, she wrote. The comparative freedom which woman enjoyed in mid-nineteenth century stemmed from chivalry. This started when Francis the First introduced women of the nobles at court, which had previously been the lair of bearded men. Thus the foundation for the modern social system was laid.[22]

The repudiation of knight-errantry turned men to sublimate their pride in learning, literature, and philosophy. Women kept pace with men in these new activities, said the environmentalist. They preached in public, supported partisanship, wrote and published books, filled chairs of philosophy and law, learned Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and other languages, harangued the popes, and in short, did all that men did. Hypatia, daughter of Theon of Alexandria excelled in astronomy and philosophy, and a young lady of Bologna in the thirteenth century took a doctor of laws and filled a chair of jurisprudence. Other

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[22]Ibid., II, 118-119.

outstanding females were Victoria Colonna, Marchioness of Pescara, Isabella of Rosera, Lady Jane Grey, Queen Elizabeth, and Mary, Queen of Scots.[23]

The literature of the Renaissance paved the way for a discussion of the merits of women in general. The animadversions from both sexes wrestled with whether women were equal, superior, inferior, a necessary evil, or comparable to men in their special sphere.[24]

By the sixteenth century the controversy included in juxtaposition, panegyrics on women and persecution of witches. The respect, which was being revived, for their intuitive powers underwent a drastic change. People began to credit every unaccountable event to the connivance of any old, haggard woman in the neighborhood, and if she attempted an explanation, it was regarded as the chicanery of the devil. The extra-sensory powers of witches made fortune-telling, magic potions, spiritual communion, and immodesty their trade-marks, and old women in league with devils and fairies were supposed to be especially busy on halloween. These superstitions continued in full force in the seventeenth century where they burst forth in various witch hunts in the thirteen British colonies, the most fanatic being in Massachusetts. Child noted in her history that fragments still lingered on in the nineteenth century.

In this same general period, a taste for rich and elegant dress infected both sexes. Elaborate dress reached such extravagance in the

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[23]Sarah Grimke, pp. 62-64; Child, Progress of Religious Ideas, II, 126-129.

[24]Child, Progress of Religious Ideas, II, 129-131.

reign of Henry the Fourth in France he was obliged to restrain it by sumptuary laws. Paul of Russia, Elizabeth of England, and others followed his example, while the Puritans during the Cromwellean reign in England denounced ornamentation as sinful. The unnatural restraint exercised during this era caused a violent reaction during the reign of Charles the Second until ladies garb rapidly degenerated into extreme immodesty.[25]

Another modern innovation grew from the decline of chivalry and the disinterest in learning. The "art of society" intrigued women who threw aside pedantry for graceful accomplishments, vivacity of manners, fascinating labyrinths of behavior, and witty conversation. The art of society in the English speaking world received a severe blow during the Commonwealth when society took on a stern bleakness. Dramas, shows, dance halls, gambling, and amusements of every kind were prohibited, and theaters, casinos, and ballrooms were closed. The disgrace heaped on women made love a sin to be expiated by strict religious practices. Everywhere ministers dramatically reiterated her primacy in the expulsion from Eden, and since she was still one of the greatest tools of the devil, good Christians should shun her. Man's complacency in her caused his first debasement. Thereafter, he was conceived in sin and born in iniquity. The spirit of the times warned him not to glory in the weaker sex or worship the genesis of corruption. The fear of her influence caused men to limit her education to a knowledge of cookery, domestic medicine, and petty theological squabbles. The

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[25]Ibid., II, 131, 133, 135, 137, 258; Sarah Grimke, p. 14.

American puritans aped their English brothers, wrote Child, by considering the love of woman as a snare and her delight in dress as a shameful momento of the fall of mankind. Many a discussion turned about this popular theme.[26]

In 1660 an era of shameless profligacy was ushered in England. Ladies of the court for the most part paid token respect to modesty in dress and manners. Men camouflaged their selfish sensuality with enough decency in order not to defeat their designs. The art of society declined to where men outwardly treated women with scrupulous attention but inwardly loathed them. In place of the respect due to them as human beings, they received contemptuous satire from such men as the Earl of Rochester, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift.

The emphasis on industry, domestic virtue, and modest apparel during the reign of Mary in England gave society a new climate. Queen Anne placed the social intercourse of the sexes on a polite and pleasant level with a minimum of profligacy. Needlework absorbed the lady who spoke or moved like she had poor health--complete helplessness was the feminine mode. Five or six-inch heels, excentric hair-dos, and hooped petticoats with circumferences of six or seven yards further strengthened the mode. From the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the place of woman in society had changed little, concluded Child.[27]

The romances of the latter part of the seventeenth century

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[26]Child, Progress of Religious Ideas, II, 139-140, 255-256; Sarah Grimke, pp. 61-62.

[27]Child, Progress of Religious Ideas, II, 140-143.

introduced a prosaic love-sick, sentimental hero and heroine who always fell in love at first sight but had to wade through many difficulties placed between them by libertines and relatives. Novels pictured love as the chief end in life for women; other phenomena were merely accessories. However, a small group of women denounced the polite flattery of the times and became literary ladies. Nicknamed "blue-stockings," these pedantics evoked a new hail of satire on feminine folly. Some suggested in half-humor and half-seriousness that the learning of women be restricted to enough chemistry to boil a stew, enough geography to find her way around the house, and enough mathematics to add a food bill. According to Sarah Grimke in 1838, some still limited a woman's library to a Bible and a cook book.[28]

Two events in "our times," concluded Child, held great promise for women by propagating the idea that all men were born free and equal. These were the American and French revolutions. Frances Wright believed a conspiracy of the aristocracy in the United States and England had delayed the fulfillment of this dream. A few years later Margaret Fuller saw a broader protest being made for women as the principle of liberty became better understood. More people were realizing that few men had had a fair chance and fewer women still. The French revolution also helped in the attempt to emancipate women by giving them the title of citoyenne and men the title of citoyen. Although raised from the level of subject to that of citizen, they still lacked equality by

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[28] Ibid., II, 144; Sarah Grimke, pp. 61-62. She probably had reference to Lord Byron. See Thomas Moore, Life of Lord Byron, with his Letters and Journals (London: John Murray, 1854), I, 60.

mid-nineteenth century. Yet Frenchwomen took active part in their husbands' businesses, talked politics in saloons, sold goods at the counter, and worked in the fields. American women did the same on a smaller scale. Mid-nineteenth century America offered to expand the idea of liberty, and auspiciously promised to broaden the opportunities for women.[29]

This sketch of history which women read and wrote gave considerable impetus to the woman's movement. First, they recognized the relativity of customs and rules governing their behavior, especially those of recent vintage which society claimed to trace to Adam and Eve. While western civilization extolled the corset, petticoat, and hooped skirt as the only acceptable dress for women, the people in the Orient thought veils and long flowing clothes the only proper dress for them; the south sea islanders favored more skimpy apparel; and the Indians elevated hides. The environmentalist delightfully pointed to the changing fashion in western civilization to debunk the sanctity of dress customs. The love of dress which was supposed to be peculiar to women could not be traced to Eve. Her fig leaves and hides, if the Biblical account was true, did not differ from those of Adam. For these historians, feminine love of fine raiment in Europe began during the Renaissance, declined during the Reformation, and with some ups and downs had continued to the present time (1840's). These conclusions

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[29]Frances Wright Darusmont, Course of Popular Lectures, Historical and Political (Philadelphia: Published by the author, 1836), pp. 25-66; Fuller, Writings, p. 116; Child, Progress of Religious Ideas, II, 156; Fuller, Women in the Nineteenth Century, p. 7.

braced the dress reformers for the long difficult struggle against propriety.

Women became aware that the art of society, at least in the English speaking world, had changed as often as sovereigns. They read, for example, how Elizabeth practiced the so-called masculine virtues and encouraged other women to do likewise and how later rulers either made women the source of evil, confined them to domestic tasks, shunned them as much as possible, allowed them permissive behavior, or rendered them a fashionable, helpless creature. The environmentalists confidently told their readers the present propriety which women were forced to obey could change completely in the next ten years, so why give it the reverence as to things eternal! Sarah Grimke proposed that permanent rules of conduct be deducted from the eternal laws of God which reason demonstrated. The whole realm of custom and tradition began to experience the first shocks of the coming quake.[30]

The progress of the world with its ebbs and flows from earliest times towards the elevation and perfection of mankind also enamored the woman's movement. A thousand marks of the gradual advance of mankind had been left. Some of these signs included the beginnings of astronomy in India and Egypt, civil government, industry, inter-tribal and international pacts for protection, the invention of the alphabet, the development of aesthetic appreciation and philosophy by the Greeks, law by the Romans, and the printing press. In giant steps, man impeached the infallibility of Rome and the supremacy of kings, proclaimed the

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[30]Sarah Grimke, p. 15.

natural rights of man, denounced ignorance and obscurantism, and finally established the United States, a nation drawing its life's blood from equality and liberty. The next great stride, prophesied Frances Wright, would be liberty and equality for both sexes through a rational, national, and co-educational system.[31]

Although history pointed to human progress, mankind still remained a pilgrim in the land, a stranger to his inheritance, and a pleader for a better life. In every age, the higher nature of mankind sought a level of existence far above the primitive but found itself locked in a death struggle with its inclement nature. Now and then a great person--woman or man--arose who shook off the prejudice and passion of his age and heeded the promptings of his higher nature. Principles of enlightenment were sown among men. The promise was great enough from time to time that men in all ages proclaimed the Gods themselves had come to dwell on earth. They saw the future pregnant with hope. These triumphant moments tempted the pigmy side of man to forsake its evil ways--personal selfishness, decrepit skepticism, and covetous materialism--to step in the footprints left in the wilderness of mankind. Conviction swelled in their hearts until the pigmy men raised the cry: God is alive; all men are brothers in his great family. Soon after this savior of mankind slept, explained Margaret Fuller, the fumes of passions and prejudice choked the life from his truths. Selfishness barred the door against the era of a truly human existence, and the

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[31]Frances Wright, Course of Popular Lectures as Delivered by Frances Wright (2d ed.; New York: Published at the Office of The Free Enquirer, 1892), p. 60.

great hope of the future flickered. The principles which pointed mankind to its rights and claims were either warped or destroyed. Then another great person would arise with the freshness of truth to battle the pigmy side of human nature.

This certain vision was again felt in the nineteenth century by the expanding interpretation of liberty and equality, Margaret Fuller exclaimed. Again mankind stirred with the hope of regaining lost equality and its natural rights. And women felt the quickening of the higher faculties of mankind. To assure victory, they had to enter the fray with great energy. Thus history proved the reality of an uphill struggle to goodness and the golden promise of a new vogue for aggressive women in nineteenth century America.[32]

Last, history reaffirmed the reality of the struggle of the sexes in which man used the lower nature and woman the higher one of mankind. When viewed across the wide expanse of history, the environmentalist concluded that neither sex had gained complete ascendancy over the other. After the fall of Adam, man successfully tyrannized the home, then extended his ambition over his neighbors. Degradation followed his aggressive aspirations. Especially depressed were women. However some women before the time of Christ gained equality with men for a time in war, in literature, and in goodness. Christ restored the balance between the sexes, but after His death, greedy men sought to make woman a voluptuous servant by taking away her restored rights. The

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[32]Fuller, Women in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 1-4, 7, 24-25; Fuller, Writings, pp. 212-213; Child, Progress of Religious Ideas, III, 458-461.

Middle Ages deepened the oppressions of the female; only a few enjoyed chivalrous respect. The flowering of feminine talents in the Renaissance made it seem the struggle between the sexes might end or, at least, restore woman to her natural place in society. However, the vigorous counter-offensive of the Reformation and thereafter destroyed these gains.

By the time these historians had reached their age, they were convinced the servitude of woman was as bad as at any time in history. Man, steeped in his ancient art, was up to his old tricks; he knew no other way to treat woman. He still wanted a plaything dressed like a doll for his hour of recreation. The sale of women continued unabated, whether it was selling a bride in an Eastern country, or a Negro into slavery in the New World, or placing a young lady on the block at a debutante market. He continued to do as men had always done who had given up the whip--crush the mind of woman. Sarah Grimke pointed to the Pastoral letter of the General Association of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts (1837) as an example of this conscious masculine conspiracy. It declared that women who took up public reform lost the care and protection of men by forcing the male into "self-defense against her." What a travesty of justice! she exclaimed. They effaced woman's mind and impaired her morality, then looked with triumph on the ruin and pronounced it inferior.[33]

Man still looked on woman as a slave and treated her accordingly. She was educated to personal vanity, relegated to a non-legal existence,

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[33]Sarah Grimke, pp. 11, 15, 17-18, 20, 27, 29, 33, 61, 102.

made a political retainer, a spectator of government, an economic employee, a slave to sensibility, a religious novice, a physical valet to a feeble constitution, and a social handmaid to propriety and opinion. Men still resorted to violence and brute force when less direct methods failed to subordinate women.[34]

The supporters of the women's movement asked men to take their feet off the necks of women and let them enjoy those rights which had been wrested away from them. Skeptical of masculine resignation, they called on women to renew the struggle of the sexes. They took it upon themselves to keep abreast of the reasons and methods of the subversive activities of man and the seriousness of his commitment. Next they worked to solidify feminine energy which would bring victory by neutralizing man's power.[35]

The pages from the past formed an important additive to the developing ideology of the woman's movement by driving home to women what they had done in the past, where they were in the nineteenth century, and what was left to be done. By finding themselves in history, they gave direction to the present.

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[34] Ibid., pp. 14-15, 71.

[35] Ibid., p. 10.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MORAL REGENERATION OF THE WORLD--PART I

In the nineteenth century woman's awareness of the male conspiracy to degrade the female sex drove her to agitate for a moral regeneration of society. It assaulted politics, economics, education, religion, marriage laws, and society, but its evangelical nature tended to violate the premises of environmentalism as the years passed. The zeal it whipped up gradually turned the movement feministic, emotional, irrational, coersive, and opportunistic in the latter part of the century. It was opportunistic and irrational in that it blended arguments from innatism and environmentalism to suit the occasion, feministic by the prominent place it gave to the superiority of woman, emotional by elevating woman to be the conscience of mankind, and coersive by advocating forceful adherence to its pronouncements. However, a more rational, sensible, and persuasive program was proposed before this period of extremism. Strengthened by environmentalism, history, rationalism, and the tradition of the American Revolution, this activism sponsored a broad program of moral regeneration.

The Justification for Female Reformers

Women talked about this program and their role in the accelerated progress of mankind and the rapid increase and spread of knowledge in the 1830's and 1840's. A bitter controversy erupted whenever they

suggested the spirit of the times demanded female reformers. This forced the women to justify their position.

Margaret Fuller found the tone and feeling of the masculine world to be "you cannot reason with a woman," and "tell that to women and children." The implied inferiority of woman prevented man from representing woman fairly and caused Fuller to call women to fight for their natural rights. Her opponents declared this belligerency unnecessary, for every man heeded the private influence of the women around him. He was too blessed by these relations, they said, to represent them ignobly. The environmentalist used the actual conditions of the female to prove the inadequacy of this private influence: the non-existence of her legal personality, the domestic chains around her mind, the vicious procreative circle, the nemesis of fashion, and the oblique relationship of husband and wife. The innatist answered that women should use the power of the pen to express their wishes. But women did not have the free use of it, replied Fuller; the restrictions society placed on her pen, desk, and rostrum made them of little value.[1]

Another argument against the "call to arms" appealed to tradition. Time-honored domestic beauty, sexual delicacy, division of responsibility, legislative dignity, the rule of law, and masculine virtues which stabilized the world would be overthrown for a passing feminine whim. Ludicrous newspaper pictures of women in hysterics at the polls and legislative chambers filled with crying babies reinforced these fears. But the environmentalist turned to history to show that

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[1]Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Tribune Press, 1845), pp. 13, 14.

women had filled public office without covering the windows with diapers and had passionately expressed themselves in public without losing any of the delicacy of their sex. American women who voted from 1798-1807 had posed no threat to the nation's foundation, they said. It was Fuller's view that rational women in ancient Greece, Rome, and Germany had taken part in things outside the home without doing any damage to it, and so could rational women in 1844. Furthermore, it was impossible to confine women to domestic tasks; however ignorant, they interfered with "weighty affairs." Lacking the orderly plans of reason, they neglected private duties for the excitement of cunning tricks. Fuller accused her opponents of being too fearful to realize women would not leave the home any more than they already did for balls, lectures, theaters, meetings to promote missions, parties, musical shows, and revivals. Like men, they could not live without animating activities, hence they sought activity commensurate to those enjoyed by men. If they did not get them one way, she warned, they would seek them in another or perish. Until domesticity had a place in the lives of men, those of women would never be so.[2]

In a Pastoral Letter, a group of New England ministers charged women with seriously damaging feminine modesty and delicacy by engaging in public reformation. Nonsense, retorted Sarah Grimke. Women of sensibility and reason never were contaminated by scenes or discussions of misery. Clad in the panoply of God, they went forth as His dignified

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[2]Ibid., pp. 12-13; Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), p. 12.

messengers and not as females to stem the whirlwind of iniquity and misery blowing through the land. What they said and did was done irrespective of sex, as there was no room for this distinction in the moral regeneration of society.[3] By healing the wretched victims of moral polution, they were no more corrupted than Christ had been, and their experiences tended to keep marriage from sinking to the level of brute creation. When they taught their children to be moderate in all things and to avoid the degrading and brutalizing vices, they hastened the golden era of America. Neither they nor their children would let the animal overwhelm the higher nature in their intercourse with other people.[4]

Then the environmentalists stopped sparring with their opponents and initiated fresh sallies of their own. Since the masculine world charged women with bringing sin into the world and traced all the sin to that source, Sarah Grimke accepted it with tongue in cheek as a powerful reason why they should labor with all diligence to eradicate it.[5]

A second avenue opened by the environmentalists said the interdependence of the sexes compelled woman to be an active reform agent. The congeniality of the sexes made their interests identical.[6] Each others' habits and opinions were raised or lowered, animated or stifled

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[3]Sarah M. Grimke, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), pp. 24, 25.

[4]Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[5]Ibid., p. 115.

[6]Lydia Maria Child, The Progress of Religious Ideas Through Successive Ages (New York: C. S. Francis and Company, 1855), II, 142.

by precisely the same circumstances.[7] Wollstonecraft expressed it thusly: faithless husbands made faithless wives; when men neglected the duties of humanity, women followed their example. The law of their "common being" prevented either one from reaching his true stature while the other remained in any wise deprived of his. However no particular privilege was to be extended to either one.[8]

The interdependence of the sexes which had gradually perverted into the superiority of woman had some influence on the environmental thought. Although prominant in innatist thought, it moderately influenced the early environmentalists. The innatist used it to compensate woman for her so-called inferior reason and physique, and before 1848 some environmentalists found it served well to magnify the importance of woman while others adopted it as a means to end the entrenched restrictions placed on the reciprocity of the sexes. Because of this, some early environmentalists proclaimed the equal influences of the sexes and the eminent influence of woman in the same paragraph. At times they seemed carried away in applying superlatives to woman which man had reserved for himself. Even though the idea of female superiority violated the fundamental tenets of the innatist (the inferiority of woman) and of the environmentalist (the equality of the sexes), both traditions used it extensively after 1865.

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[7] /Judith Sargent Stevens Murray/, The Gleaner (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1798), III, 194, in EAI no. 34162; Frances Wright, Course of Popular Lectures as Delivered by Frances Wright (2d ed.; New York: Published at the Office of The Free Enquirer, 1829), p. 55.

[8] Wollstonecraft, pp. 12, 71; Margaret Fuller, The Writings of Margaret Fuller, ed. Mason Wade (New York: Viking Press, 1941), pp. 109, 213, Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, p. 18.

Wollstonecraft believed the improperly educated woman would stop the growth of knowledge and virtue, for truth had to be common to all to affect general behavior. Thus, she claimed that society advanced more rapidly towards civilization which raised woman to the same level as man, where she could soften the character and polish his manners. Lydia M. Child went farther. She found music, poetry, and the fine arts naturally flowing from this union. Grimke believed educated, pious women could effect a revolution in morals, manners, virtues, and mental culture in one-half or one-third the time it would take a similar body of men. For her the miserable condition of mankind stemmed directly from man's opposition to the improving capacities of woman. Frances Wright asserted human improvement would be feeble as long as the most "important and influential" half of the race was circumscribed. Where they stood in the "scale of improvement" determined that of society, race or nation. When they were civilized, so was society; when ignorant, society was gross and vulgar; when wise, it was enlightened; when foolish, it was unstable and dissipated; when free, it prospered; and when enslaved, it was degraded. Women exerted their power for evil and ignorance or for good and knowledge. Wright closed her remarks with a milder statement: when a disease afflicted one part of society, it injured all its parts, or those who sacrificed the rights of others to establish their own pretensions did in fact impeach their own liberties and lower the whole of mankind in the scale of being.[9]

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[9]Wollstonecraft, pp. 9, 10, 206, 144; Lydia Maria Child, Brief History of the Condition of Women in Various Ages and Nations (rev. and cor. 5th ed.; New York, 1845), p. 217; Grimke, p. 50; Wright, pp. 44-45, 55; Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (New York:

The need to break the chains which bound down woman's meliorating powers led to a wholesale condemnation of passivism. "Be up and doing," wrote one author, join the great task of reformation. The woman who shrank from the exigency of bringing the good life to others and quietly basked in the comforts of her domestic circle was the most recreant of all creatures, broadcast another writer. Secret prayer which men recommended to woman as her mightiest weapon also came under suspicion. Without labor, it accomplished nothing. Sarah Grimke admonished her readers to follow the example of her friend who sobbed and pleaded with God to free the Negro slave. In the midst of these dramatic meditations, she realized that tears never melted chains. Instead it was activism. She straightway left her chambers to be an abolitionist--her prayers and her works going hand in hand. When the voice of God commanded to "go and cry in the ears of the people," women had to follow these promptings. The environmentalists crystalized this argument for activism in the simple statement of what was morally right for man was morally right for woman.[10]

Another author told women the only way they could determine their status and position in a democracy was to make their own decisions. Self-expression won natural rights and placed them on the same platform

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Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), pp. 280, 285. The innatists' view of the superiority of woman can be seen in Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (New Haven, 1821-1822), II, 337-356.

[10]Grimke, pp. 39-42, 102, 122-123, 45; Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin, a Dialogue (a type-facsimile reprint of the 1st edition printed in 1798; New Haven: Carl & Margaret Rollins, 1935), p. 44; Wright, pp. 61, 155-160; Murray, III, 188; Frederick Marryat, Second Series of a Diary in America (Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, 1840), pp. 100, 105.

with man. Whether public lectures, democratic institutions, education, the home, the husband, or women's organizations, all means were proper tools for this great moral enterprise.[11]

The Rationale for Reform

The extent of this remodelling of the United States can best be seen in the words of Frances Wright. She told audiences from St. Louis to Boston in 1828 it was time to check the ambitions of organized clergy, remand "the demoralizing effects of a false system of law," "heal the strife fomented by sectarian religion," break "the pride of ideal wealth," and "raise honest industry to honor." The poor and afflicted needed help to escape their miserable environment. It was time, she said, to recognize that every sorrow which corroded the human heart, every vice which diseased the body and mind, and every crime which distrubed society was "the distorted progeny of one corrupt parent--Ignorance." It was time to proclaim this truth from "the housetop, in the market place, in city and forest," and throughout the land. It was time to turn the churches into "halls of science," the "schools of faith into schools of knowledge," and the colleges for the privileged into "state institutions for all youth of the land." She called on her listeners to arrest the "speculations respecting unseen worlds and inconceivable mysteries," to use all inquiries for the improvement of human institutions, and to establish those political institutions and traditions which would effectively realize the principles of liberty

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[11]Grimke, pp. 20-21, 39; Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 19, 40; Fuller, Writings, p. 109.

and equality enshrined in the Declaration of Independence.[12]

First Premises

However, such spokesmen as Frances Wright opposed indiscriminate reform. They advocated going back to first premises before commencing any change. In the 1790's Mary Wollstonecraft believed that the "present state of society" forced one to go back to first principles from which subsequent arguments and conclusions were deduced. Wright elaborated this view in 1828. The public mind, she wrote, was unfit to discuss any proposed societal renovation until it thoroughly understood "first premises." In her lectures, she attempted to lay down these first premises as the standard by which to test all existing practices and opinions. If the primary truths were sound, she said, their superficial expressions would be so; and if unsound, they would be untrue. Any changes in the roots of a tree would eventually alter the leaves and branches. Otherwise innovation accomplished little, as the cure of symptoms seldom achieved anything. Provided with this guage, environmentalists proposed to work customs, mores, and institutions back to their sources.[13]

The Nature of Opposing Truths Examined

The environmentalist wondered what caused conflicting versions of truth to exist among men, dividing nations and families into antagonistic parties. His investigations showed that the ideas of the most

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[12]Wright, pp. 151-152.

[13]Fuller, Writings, p. 122; Wollstonecraft, pp. 15, 124; Wright, pp. 16, 91.

unpretending savage and the most lettered man were shaped by the amount of knowledge they possessed. Since both tenaciously adhered to their ideas, opinions, superstitions, and practices as the most just and true faith, the environmentalist asked whether or not truth was more than blind opinion. Were right and wrong only figments of the human imagination? Did the differences in views mean truth was relative? Without a standard or tangible evidence of truth, mankind would be sold to error and misery through all its generations, said the environmentalist.[14]

A sure test of truth did exist, hence it was not relative, he argued. All opinion rested on either real or imagined evidence. As validity depended solely on the truth or falsehood of the data used during their formulation, the environmentalist suggested a review of the true nature of knowledge to solve the dilemma of competing versions of truth through the world.[15]

Before a person could reflect, he had to have something on which to think, and the only way he knew a thing was by its immediate contact with the senses. Truth was fact which signified things known. Knowledge, whether about himself or the external world, was a compound of accurately observed and agreeing sensations.[16]

To reason accurately about any one thing, a person had to know all there was to know about it. The larger his sphere of observation, and the more intense his investigation of all therein, the more accurate

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[14]Wright, pp. 17, 18.

[15]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[16]Ibid., pp. 22, 29.

would be his views; his acquaintance with any object was directly proportional to the number of senses used in patient observation and inquiry. Likewise erroneous opinions came from insufficient investigation or imperfect recollection of them. In other words, false ideas originated in ignorance and in the superstitions, usages, laws, and habits which that benightedness engendered. The only certain way to rectify the mistake was to refer again to the object itself, for the number of facts and the accuracy with which they were compared and associated determined exactly how a person saw the outside world. Whenever his knowledge was complete, his opinions would be just.[17]

A person's individual sensations supplied him with knowledge, whereas the attested sensations of others supplied him with a belief. He may believe or disbelieve the reported sensations of others, explained the environmentalist. Knowledge differed from belief in this important way: the latter included all the varieties of intellectual assent from the highest to the lowest stage of probability while the former supplied the matter of fact certainty. As a person's own sensations alone gave him knowledge of a thing, so his belief of a thing became stronger the more he accurately reestablished the sensations of those whose testimony he received. Neither male nor female was exempt from acquiring actual knowledge if they hoped to form just opinions and evaluate those received from other people.

Frances Wright, like other environmentalists, advocated the scientific method as the best road to knowledge. In her view all the

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[17]Ibid., pp. 19, 22-26; Brown, p. 85.

sciences were compounds of facts which had been either ascertained or were ascertainable by the sensations of the individual. All that a person gained otherwise constituted belief and could not be matter of fact certainty--only greater or lesser probability. The physical sciences, for example, which were a compilation of facts about the material world, fostered accurate reasoning. Completely factual, they forced a person to investigate nature, in whole or in part, with all his senses and to reason from the premises of primary information. Hence Wright gave her full blessing to the mental habits which the sciences inculcated.[18]

A person who took his ideas from the world of facts could realize what was possible and impossible by tracing each in a cause and effect relationship to its ultimate consequences. With this knowledge of the world of things, he could safely investigate other branches of knowledge. An understanding of the nature of man, matter, and its phenomena prepared him with accurate analogies to judge the credulity of past history, separate fable from reality, fairy tales from true history, and mythology from sound philosophy. No longer would he mistake the tricks of conjurors or the phenomena of nature for miracles.[19]

Evidence other than the tangible or that admitted through the senses played no part in determining truth. However Wright claimed there was "the more immediate and the more remote testimony" of the senses, but nothing more and nothing less. The science of mathematics,

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[18]Wright, pp. 19, 26-30, 66, 67.

[19]Ibid., p. 68.

and even morals, she explained, rested on proof supplied by positive sensations. Yet teachers often taught these subjects as if they were imaginative abstractions instead of substantiated data. How could people, she asked, have the concept of number or form if no objects or substances existed around them? The claims of some persons that moral truths appealed only to the mind or sensibility led her to trace concepts of good or bad to experience. This emotional evaluation closely followed the reception and evaluation of sense data.

For example, should a person hear of a great crime, his emotions would promptly and decidedly disapprove of it. Should new facts at a later time throw a degree of doubt and perplexion on the supposed crime, the feelings of disapproval would at once become ones of perplexion and indecision. And if the supposed crime proved to be the reverse when all the facts were known, the moral emotions, said Thomas Upham, would change from condemnation to approval. The diversity of moral decisions among mankind depended entirely on the amounts of knowledge a people or nation had; their different moral judgments led directly to different civil and political institutions. In other words, emotion followed the acquisition of knowledge. Without these antecedent perceptions, there could be no emotions; without the antecedent feelings of like and dislike, the moral values were absent; and without the latter, there could be no moral obligation.[20]

The environmentalist advised women and men to consult experience, either their own or other people's before adopting a "rule of life."

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[20]Thomas C. Upham, Elements of Mental Philosophy (no publishing information as part of title-page is missing), pp. 416, 417, 436, 437.

Revolutionary in character, this advice substituted experience for "laws and doctrines," except when they coincided with the evidence of the senses and the testimony of reason. Otherwise, they were false and had no binding force in one's life. With truth the same for each person, there could be no set of truths for the rich, another for the poor; or one for men and another for women. Every class and person was responsible to separate the fiction from the non-fiction.[21]

Change and Truth

The environmentalist also found the nature of change elucidated an oft forgotten aspect of knowledge and opinion. All things underwent modification until nothing was as it had been or would be the same in the future as it presently was. The constantly changing environment, the fundamental source of human knowledge, necessitated that each person keep abreast of these changes, else his ideas based on previous and different circumstances would be alien to the world about him. Likewise changes in the moral emotions corresponded exactly to those in the antecedent perceptions which had called them into existence. In other words, a person could expect his emotions to change in accordance with modifications in those perceptions on which they were founded. When the moral and mental frame of reference failed to keep pace with developments in the physical world, explained the environmentalist, a serious intellectual lag appeared which unfortunately found its way into human institutions.[22]

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[21]Wright, pp. 56, 78-79, 88.

[22]Ibid., pp. 63-64; Upham, p. 417.

Changes in the physical world simply happened and were neither good or bad, said Frances Wright. Man made them moral or immoral. Yet changes in the world could make thought and feeling progressive, retrogressive, or neither. The latter type were always trivial. Retrogressive opinions led to detrimental action by mankind, but as quickly as experience proved the error of the decision, a different plan of action was accepted. The more freedom mankind had to consult experience, wrote the environmentalist, the quicker bad laws, practices, and institutions were corrected and the easier future adjustments could be made.[23]

The irrevocable innovations made in the physical world required a conscientious effort on the part of man to keep his institutions and views abreast of these modifications. Otherwise violent reform or revolution overtook a society. A surety for adjustment constituted the most valuable tradition of any society in the view of the environmentalist. Even the worst government which gave the people power to change it was far better than the best one which violently resisted any alterations. The American government, said Frances Wright, through its simple machinery of representation exemplified this ability to correlate its institutions to the changing knowledge about the world. Evil consisted primarily in that which hindered and restrained such coordination. The American political system provided the scope which man needed

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[23]Ibid., pp. 164, 171-182. The environmentalists felt there were absolute truths--man was there; the earth was real; the universe was out there; hunger was regular, etc. They also believed truth was relative to the times and circumstances, not relative in the sense it was not binding, but subject to be replaced by new truths and opinions as the environment changed.

to keep his ideas and institutions up-to-date.[24]

Thus the environmentalist believed the progressive capacity of man could cope with inevitable physical change and the tensions it caused in his mental and moral world. By aggressive rationalism he had left the animals to sleep by themselves in the field and had promised to make himself perfect the farther he rose in the scale of beings. His great task was to perpetually reform all outmoded institutions and views.[25]

The Attack on Opinion

With this understanding of first premises, the environmentalist struck the first blows of the general reformation at false opinion and its emanations of biases and prejudices. An opinion, he wrote, was a spontaneous conclusion of the mind derived from the facts therein. Its veracity depended on the accuracy of the evidence received and how well it was examined, and its falseness either had no factual basis or resulted from carelessly digested facts.[26]

All opinions at one time or another probably resulted from some kind of deliberation. Frequently derived from local expedience instead of a universal principle, they became moss-covered but venerated prejudices as the years passed by. The reasons which called them into existence ceased to be valid or had been forgotten, thus making them

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[24]Ibid., pp. 51, 174-175; Brown, p. 102; Wollstonecraft, p. 22.

[25]Brown, p. 102; Wright, p. 20.

[26]Wright, pp. 130, 129, 136; William Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness, ed. F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), I, 52-95.

fond and obstinate persuasions without basis. The moment a reason could be given, they ceased to be prejudices, even though they were errors in judgment. A false opinion evidenced nothing but its own existence, and persistent adherence to it inspite of facts to the contrary defied reason. Mankind, especially women, needed to return to those universal principles which anteceded prejudices.[27]

The spontaneity of convictions suggested to the environmentalist the impossibility of changing opinions except by stronger evidence than that which first generated them. He had faith that all people would arrive at similar opinions when they had the same knowledge of things within the range of human observation. Instead of wasting time and money on perpetuating beliefs, he advocated a system of universal instruction in all branches of knowledge which would aid in forming just views.[28] Humanitarian in purpose, this proposal sought to correct the spirit of proselytism and censoriousness which enthralled mankind in superstition and divided them into angry groups of combatants. Especially, it hoped to end "corrupt public opinions" which continually mauled the minds of women.[29]

Men seldom grew angry with each other on account of how much knowledge they possessed, said the environmentalist. Unbacked and unspurred ignorance never engendered irrational tempests in society over unintentional differences in opinion. When people realized the

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[27]Wollstonecraft, pp. 123-124; Brown, p. 76.

[28]Wright, pp. 139-141.

[29]Ibid., pp. 126, 132; Grimke, pp. 14, 116; Murray, pp. 200-217; Fuller, Writings, p. 214; Brown, pp. 78-82.

annihilation of conclusions required the annihilation of facts, they saw the folly of persecuting opinions whose formulation a person could not always help. An honest inquiry either collaborated his opinions with facts or revealed insufficient substantiation for them. In the latter case, incontrovertible facts should be given to him which pointed to a more correct opinion. To stigmatize, torture, imprison or force to contradict was anachronistic. People with a clear understanding of the nature and formation of opinions never were guilty of persecuting the involuntary conclusions of the mind.[30]

But society organized its instructive institutions to perpetuate certain views and to suppress others. The difference in opinions--the inexorable consequence of varying degrees of knowledge--were used to justify wars, inquisitions, massacres, and torture chambers. It set apart teachers of opinions instead of teachers of facts to expound inexplicable creeds, speculations of faith, unintelligible mysteries, doctrines, and quibbles. Few of these instructors imparted the objects of knowledge, hence both teachers and pupils wasted their lives and fortunes in quarrels over hair-splitting, absurd ideas, and unimportant possibilities.[31]

"Shallow reasoners" upheld prejudice throughout society by curious reasoning and defended measures "rotten at the core" as necessary. Expedience continually confused truth with verbage, forms for virtue, and specious prejudices for knowledge. Men employed reason to justify their

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[30]Wright, pp. 28, 130, 131, 132.

[31]Ibid., pp. 65, 133-135.

prejudices, whose origins were lost in the remote past, rather than to root them out. An intellectual cowardice saturated society with its imperfect but plausible conclusions based on partial experience. Trained in hypocrisy and constrained by fear, mankind everywhere assumed the semblence of certain opinions lest bread be taken from their families and peace from their homes.[32]

Whether a person was a teacher or writer on political, scientific, moral, economic, social, or religious topics, he was compelled to support the dominant prejudices regardless of their validity. They dared not speak or write that which endangered their popularity, hence jeopardizing their fortunes or livelihood. All had to more or less pander to the weaknesses, vices, and fears of the public, who rewarded them with money or applause. In place of truth they used the palatable, for it opened purses. As long as the mental and moral instruction of man remained solely in the hands of hired servants who depended on their teaching and literary labors for a livelihood, mankind heard but half the truth, said the environmentalist. When irrational disputes arose between these perveyors of opinions, the corrosion of society proceeded at a rapid pace. Whether by politicians, lawyers, editors, school teachers, "the priesthood," or college professors, the attack on opinions was profaned by blood and expiatory atonements. In the absence of such persons, bloodshed and bitterness tended to disappear as did the master vice of society--the persecution of opinion.[33]

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[32]Wollstonecraft, pp. 15-16, 151; Wright, pp. 69-71.

[33]Wright, pp. 33, 36, 134-135.

These supporters of "old doctrines and old ways" always opposed every discovery in science which opened the book of knowledge to mankind and purged its mind of adherence to mysterious happenings and unsubstantiated creeds. They rent the air with cries of heresy at every inquiry into the truth of received opinions or the value of existing practices. Any suggestion to better distribute property, leisure, education, and labor was condemned as visionary. Plans to "destroy crime by removing provocation" or "vice by removing ignorance" ran afoul of the desires of those who lived off the fears and vices of their fellow creatures.[34] As a result, mankind was thrown off balance. Error had to be overthrown before facts could be established; obscurantism had to be chased from the imagination before what was could be ascertained; superstition had to be banished before a person could open his eyes; and social pressure had to be dissolved before the faculties could function.[35]

Conclusion

Women could not get an understanding of the true conditions in the United States, said the environmentalist, or know how to cure its ills from those who sold themselves for popular patronage. They had to seek truth elsewhere. This bypassing of established categories of thought or approved ways of looking at the contemporary scene was the strength of the environmental attack on the variety of opinions and persecution of such by mankind. It encouraged women to fearlessly

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[34] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[35] Ibid., pp. 65, 133-135.

examine any belief as if it were established only yesterday and not to heed the peddlars of fright who knew their reign would end when the daughters of Eve drank from the well of knowledge. But unless they, and men to a lesser extent, stepped forward to reveal new knowledge and oppose those who would say anything for money or praise, the reign of human error, vice, and suffering would carry the world to its doom.[36]

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[36]Ibid., pp. 38, 39, 33, 37; Grimke, pp. 31, 91, 126.

CHAPTER XV

THE MORAL REGENERATION OF THE WORLD--PART II

The environmentalist considered the popular but out-of-date opinions the source of evil, and set out to modernize them. He believed that by clearing the environment of its unsavory aspects, man-made ills would disappear. By abolishing slavery, the Negro would have access to the education which would turn him into a good citizen; by prohibiting the sale of liquor, drunkenness would disappear, poverty would leave the home, and insanity would decline sharply; and by turning prisons into places of rehabilitation instead of punishment, the criminal would be returned to an acceptable place in society. If women had the right to vote, they would clean up the sordid political environment; if the working man had rights, he would install safety devices, reduce the working day to allow for cultural and intellectual development, and raise wages to improve the food, clothing, shelter, and education of his family. Indeed the factory environment would cease to drive men to crime, drink, and vice. Reform of woman's dress would improve her health such that her husband would not have to seek prostitutes for gratification. Reform would provide the machinery to retrieve the prostitute and help her to become a good mother and faithful wife, hence remove the main source of debauchery from society. International peace would eliminate war as the solution to problems, and Indian emancipation

would reduce racial tensions. The formation of unfortunate habitual associations of ideas would be prevented by proper educational circumstances; the desire to live by rational laws would make obsequious subservience unnecessary; the demand for equal justice would force the legal profession to exalt truth rather than fortune seeking; marriage would delight the hearts of men once self-dependence, economic freedom, birth control, and equality entered the home. Female ministers would balance the intuitive and rational powers in the discovery of religious truths and the resulting religious environment would make the American people a moral, worshipful people. Thus the conscientious reworking of the environment promised to usher in the long hoped for millenium.

Reform in Religion

General

While the majority of women plodded in prayer meetings, charity organizations, and missionary programs, the reformers investigated the nature of religious knowledge, accepted the findings of higher criticism and comparative religion, waged war against the clergy, and assured women of their immortality, free agency, and religious equality with men. They made reform a prerequisite for salvation.[1]

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[1]Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin, a Dialogue (a type-facsimile reprint of the 1st edition printed in 1798, New Haven: Carl & Margaret Rollins, 1935), pp. 32-33; Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (new ed.; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), pp. 51-53, 56; Sarah M. Grimke, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), pp. 3, 5, 8-13, 15-16, 18-19, 66, 84, 99-114; Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Tribune Press, 1845), pp. 12, 16, 22, 27, 41, 39, 44; Margaret Fuller, The Writings of Margaret Fuller, ed. Mason Wade (New York: Viking Press, 1941), p. 18.

They refused to accept any religious truth before it had passed the tests of reason and experience. Epistemologically knowledge was an accumulation of facts of things known. Where no things existed, there was no knowledge and where no things were to be known, no knowledge could be had. A science, or religion, constructed without this primary data was like a castle constructed in air. If religion claimed its truths equated those of science, they had to be as apparent, undeniable, and demonstrable. The more religion claimed its truths to be indisputable, said the environmentalist, the more they had to be those on which the human mind erred the least and on which mankind had the greatest agreement. But where were the "things known," the accumulated data which supported its claims? Was religious knowledge rooted in experience?[2]

Theology or systematized religious beliefs could not be placed among the various fields of human knowledge, said the environmentalist, for it rested on unseen, unfelt, and unearthly knowledge. Its objects were not discernable by the human eye. What was it then? "Probability? possibility? theory? hypothesis? tradition? written? spoken? by whom? when? where?" Theologians claimed to impart knowledge by faith, which they defined as things unseen, but revealed to, understood by, and comprehended only by them. The environmentalist flatly denied that all such exclusive claims could be admitted to knowledge until reascertained.[3]

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[2]Frances Wright, Course of Popular Lectures as Delivered by Frances Wright (2d ed.; New York: Published at the Office of The Free Enquirer, 1829), pp. 85, 87, 93-95.

[3]Ibid., pp. 72, 98-99.

The environmentalist unlocked the intrinsic features of the religious mind by showing how it arrived at moral judgments. Morality was determined when the mind judged the goodness or badness of things. In this, as in all branches of knowledge, sensations supplied the elementary data. Therefore any faith or creed based on unseen knowledge lacked the material on which to construct a system of morality. Religion so constituted was a mode of belief while morals was a mode of action, said the reformer. By attaching merit to a religious belief and demerit to its absence, the first principle of true ethics was breached, for a "moral wrong" or a "moral right" was associated with something other than beneficial action. Too many times religion refused to trace actions to their logical consequences before forming the rule, but made the law, and then, right or wrong, forced the individual to live by it. Thus a system based on unseen and unexperienceable consequences was false.[4]

The environmentalist knew any belief needed life before it would move people and that the emotions could be drowned in a sea of objectivity. The solution to this dilemma he called the rule of true morality. People should first analyze the facts, then attach their emotions to the conclusions of the mind. Thus unfounded assumptions would never be emotionalized.[5]

For the reformer, true religion rallied the senses, mental faculties, and sensibility to formulate moral truths. It shunned

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[4] Ibid., pp. 111-112, 117, 124-125.

[5] Ibid., pp. 116, 119, 120.

dogmatic and sectarian stultification. Nature was its true bible, the wisest teacher the one who plainly expounded the book of nature, the best priest the conscience, and the most orthodox church a hall of science. Its delineation of right from wrong would eradicate evil by keeping the opinions of man abreast with changes in the outside world.[6]

With this definition of religious knowledge, the environmentalists accused religious leaders of stifling human inquiry through their benighted attacks on books, people, profane learning, and any reason but their own. Hardly a fact in science or an extension of knowledge had been purchased without the price of the blood, liberty, and domestic peace of its originator. The morality which religious leaders taught conformed with the opinions of those who paid them; the happiness of the people was secondary. The neglected minds of women left them especially vulnerable to this religious quackery which lived off the mental and moral degradation of their fellow creatures.[7]

These ostensible representatives of a pernicious system threatened to shake the foundation of the United States to pieces by its half-truths, speculations divorced from observable facts, and attempts to influence governing bodies through exciting females. In their hands, religion was a means to fulfill personal ambition. It was not blasphemous to the reformers to expose the illiteracy and weaknesses

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[6]Fuller, Writings, p. 213; Wright, p. 104; Grimke, p. 72.

[7]Wollstonecraft, p. 170; Wright, pp. 9, 73; Fuller, Writings, pp. 115-116. The Lady's Companion (July 1840), pp. 111-113 opposed such statements by women on the grounds that they were irreligious and skeptical.

of the clergy or subject them, as men, to merited admonition. They opposed giving them life-time memberships or offices in reform movements, such as anti-slavery or temperance, until their hearts were in the movement. The prevalent notion that the support of the clergy "must be had, either by persuasion or by bribery" was wrong. If the clergy refused to join "practical Christianity" or the "great moral reformation" out of conviction, women were to press on in righteous causes and let the ministers learn of the revelations of God from the footsteps left by women.[8]

The reformers anticipated a thorough revision of religious tradition by advocating that premiums be given for the discovery and dissemination of religious information. Experimental philosophers would replace the "spiritual dreamers," and churches would be laboratories of science. Inquiry would be stimulated in the United States until everyone examined the nature of things and knew the reasons for his opinions. No man's assertion but his own would be received, for he would question every conviction until all sides of a contention were examined. Authoritarianism, mental apathy, slothfulness, and indolence, would be strangers in America. If a Creator existed, they would find Him in His works, as well as the truths by which He wanted people to live.[9]

Religious reformers lobbied for the admission of women to every office of religion because men had driven the female from them in order

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[8]Grimke, pp. 123-125.

[9]Wright, pp. 72-74, 76-77, 143, 144.

to convert them into a lucrative occupation.[10] Reformers also admonished women to preach the gospel on the grounds women had preached and prophesied in the Old and New Testament days. After Christ had abolished the male priestcraft, the Holy Ghost blessed women and men on the day of Pentecost, the four daughters of Philip preached, and St. Paul called Priscilla and Aquilla his fellow laborers in spreading the Gospel. He also told women how to dress and act when preaching in public. As in the days of old, women needed to assume the offices of deacon and minister, proclaimed the reformers.[11] The success of women along these lines began when Antoinette Brown graduated in 1850 from one of the male-dominated seminaries. Her ordination and success in the pulpit started a long line of female religious leaders. One of the best known was Mary Baker Eddy who discovered Christian Science in 1866 and organized it as a faith in 1879. It was the first substantial American contribution to religion by a woman. Helena Blavatsky founded a Theosophical Society in New York in 1873, and finally Aimee Semple McPherson not only initiated the Four Square Gospel Church in Los Angeles but also broke the male hegemony in evangelism.

Higher Criticism

Several female amateur Bible critics encouraged a scientific investigation of the external (origin, history, and original text) and

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[10]Grimke, pp. 99-100; Brown, pp. 32-33; William E. Channing, The Works of William E. Channing (new and complete ed.; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1877), p. 164.

[11]Grimke, pp. 100, 104-108. Scriptures used by Grimke to support her views included I Cor. 11; Rom. 16: 3; Phil. 2: 25; I Thes. 3: 2.

internal nature (what it meant to those who wrote it) of the scriptures. They used philology, history, archaeology, and textual criticism to prove that primitive technology, customs, and ideas had found their way into the Bible. How could the scriptures be verbally inspired, they asked, when the translators described the sun revolving around the earth, God frightened of the Tower of Babel, and polygamy as the law of the universe? Recent translators had also added some of their culture to the Bible, said the reformers. If the scriptures were to be interpreted literally, then mankind had wandered far from the heritage of the Bible. With the divinity removed from the Bible, the reformers repudiated its religious rituals, ceremonies, and morality as suited to another era. They also claimed the right for women to interpret the Bible and to study the general field of religion.[12]

Comparative Religion

One environmentalist produced a three-volume work on comparative religion which struck at the uniqueness of Christianity. Lydia M. Child found the abortive addition of theology to religion had hindered the progress of religion and confused mankind by the ensuing denominational struggles. Theological differences between sections of the earth had even set off regional and international wars. In her youth, she had witnessed writers, preachers, and scripturians hide the apparent contradictions and absurdities of Jewish and Christian records under mountains of allegories and mystical interpretations while the sacred writings of

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[12]Wollstonecraft, p. 45; Grimke, pp. 4, 16, 18, 90-97, 107, 110-114.

other religions received an unscrupulous analysis and were contemptuously classified as "childish fables" or filthy "superstitions." Out of this self-deception--by no means limited to Christianity, she said--developed the idea that Christianity was the only true religion, and thus it contained unique ideas of the chosen people or sect and singular ceremonies to get one into heaven. Child's description of the progress of religious ideas from "the beginning" to mid-nineteenth century attempted to explode the myth of religious uniqueness.[13]

Religion was the product of a gradual evolution, she wrote. The accretion began in the distant past with Hinduism, which influenced religious developments in China, Persia, Greece, Rome, and Egypt. Each in turn added its own modifications. The Hebrew faith grew from the fertile soil of Egypt and later incorporated parts of the worship services of Persia and Chaldea. Eclectic in nature, Christianity partook of these traditions by adopting many of the ceremonies and beliefs from the Hindu, Egyptian, Persian, Chaldean, Greek, and Roman religions. The description of God, the source of evil, the images, the rites, and the sign of the cross in Christianity were modified from these religions, said Child.

The Christian mode of thought in the nineteenth century fused together the religious evolution of the past. The contemplations of Hinduism, the vague, but sublime thought of the Egyptian, the horde of spirits which illuminated the soul of the Persian, the supernaturalism,

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[13]Lydia Maria Child, The Progress of Religious Ideas Through Successive Ages (New York: C. S. Francis and Company, 1855), I, vii, x, xi.

practical wisdom, and equalizing system of the Hebrew, the glimpses of the infinite by Plato, the doctrine of love, universal brotherhood and forgiveness of injuries proclaimed by Christ evidenced the Christian accretion from the surrounding spiritual climate during the preceding two thousand years. The fixed idea of the unity of God, abhorrence of idolatry, and habitual concern for the poor were absorbed from the Jews; the Greeks imparted liberty and intellectual culture to protect spiritual growth against a narrow, coercive fanaticism; the Romans gave civil law to restrain the selfishness of Christian proselytes with their imperfect sense of justice; and the Teutons added reverence for women.[14]

Christianity was no more immune to evolution than other religions. It was obvious then that

> God sends his teachers unto every age,
> To every clime, and every race of men,
> With revelations fitted to their growth
> And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of TRUTH
> Into the selfish rule of one sole race:
> Therefore, each form of worship that hath swayed
> The life of man, and given it to grasp
> The master-key of knowledge, REVERENCE,
> Enfolds some germs of goodness and of right.[15]

By equating Christianity with other faiths, Child removed its uniqueness.

When mankind recognized the evolution of "great moral principles," said the reformer, it would work to further their progress by breaking down the partitions between denominations and religions. Theology which perpetuated the "baptized hatreds" would be disentangled from true worship as something extraneous and imperfect. Its peculiar opinions

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[14]Ibid., III, 420.

[15]Ibid., I, title page, quotes J. R. Lowell.

arose from the circumstances of a limited area and time and were subject to change and destined to pass away as the physical world underwent modifications. It would be clear that the present forms of Christianity would be preserved only in historical records. What actually made it a religion would remain forever, she predicted. For example, Christ would be venerated for centuries because of His precepts, and when Christiandom earnestly conformed to the practical aspects of His teaching then another step in the religious progress of mankind would appear. However, any nation which conscientiously governed its domestic and foreign affairs by the laws of Christ would abolish such things as war, famine, slavery, prisons, the gallows, poverty, and selfishness. The rest of the world would imitate it, and a new era would overtake mankind.[16]

The work done in comparative religion furnished women with the idea of an unfolding universal faith which was divorced from sect, creed, or faith and freed them from the deadening effect of denominationalism or orthodoxy. With the uniqueness of Christianity discredited, the clergy's claims to divine authority, and the theological tenets which backed up their contention lacked substance. Likewise the denominational dogma which had long subordinated women to men lost its effect. The very fact that Child wrote a three-volume work on religion repudiated the masculine belittlement of woman's capacity to discover religious truths. In the closing pages of this work, she told women that they no longer had to rely on faith, custom, tradition, opinion, scripture, or the authoritarian handouts from men to learn the will of

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[16]Ibid., I, viii, III, 458, 459.

the Creator. In fact they might help form a new religious outlook or alter Christianity by working actively to further religious evolvement.[17]

This endeavor seems to have absorbed some of the restless energy of woman. In contrast to the more orthodox Common Sense Applied to Religion (1857) and Letters on the Difficulties of Religion (1837) by Catherine Beecher was The Woman's Bible (1895) by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The latter was a detailed commentary of the Old Testament with astringent analyses of passages derogatory to women. Other women exerted their influence in organized religion by engaging in Sunday School, tractarian, missionary, Bible, and charitable work. In 1866, thirty-one women launched the first permanent feminine social gospel project, the Young Women's Christian Association, to look after the temporal, moral, and spiritual needs of the young women in business and industry.

Sphere of Woman

The reforming environmentalist dismissed the sphere of woman altogether on the basis that all duties and responsibilities belonged to mankind as a whole. Function and obligation were to be attached to the occupation instead of the sex. Nature concurred by varying the occupations of women throughout history; at one time certain tasks were feminine and at another masculine. If nature set no rule, why should men? asked the reformer who wanted to make the whole world the sphere of woman and allow her to enter any line of work she might choose.[18]

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[17] Ibid., III, 459-461; Channing, p. 164.

[18] Grimke, pp. 34, 60, 66; Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth

No Special Economic Sphere (Economic Reform)

Economic equality and independence would free women from a life geared to the uncertainities of the marriage state. Marriage could never be sacred, said Wollstonecraft, until women earned their sustenance as independently as did men. True respectability and mental emanicaption would follow as a matter of course, and women would not enter prostitution after an unfortunate loss of virtue or because vice was more honorable than destitution. A greater range of occupations would arouse their latent powers, give variety to their lives, and end the haunting ennui which drove them to disrupt the home and social circle. Last, with the exception of a few sheltered women, their "delicacy" would receive no more injury by entering masculine occupations than it received in the home.[19]

The reformers upheld the need for a division of labor in society but opposed using sex as the criterion to exclude one-half of the community from useful and honorable pursuits. Strength of body should be considered to see that a person was not given tasks beyond his strength, they said, and desire should play an important role in the

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Century, p. 33. For the opposite view, see Francis Wayland, The Elements of Moral Science (New York: Sheldon and Co., 1886), pp. 312-317.

[19]Wollstonecraft, pp. 72-73, 78-79, 161-163, 182-183; /Judith Sargent Stevens Murray/, The Gleaner (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1798), III, 219, 223, in EAI no. 34162; Fuller, Writings, pp. 182, 214; Brown, pp. 18, 47; the conservative American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany, XI (1849), 177-180 was typical of innatist literature. It argued for more occupations for women which suited her physique, mind, and character. Ladies' Repository, XVII (1857), 89-92, 727-728; Catharine Beecher, The Evils Suffered by American Women and American Children (New York, 1846), pp. 6-9, 12; Sarah J. Hale, The Ladies' Magazine (Boston, 1828), 27, 203-205.

selection of work. Take the little girls who liked to use carpenter's tools, said Margaret Fuller. Those allowed to do so by their parents were cheerful and good-humored, and those forbidden such activities became sullen and mischievous. Fourier also allowed for at least one-third of the women to engage in masculine pursuits and one-third of the men to enter feminine ones. Thus all of one sex were not to be restricted to one employment.[20]

These early reformers did not foresee a mass exodus from the home but believed many women honestly preferred the domestic circle to a career. They were mainly rebelling against the strong occupational prescriptions which kept many women from knowing what work they would like to do. They suggested that means be made available for everyone to develop his talents and abilities and that a just and reasonable division of labor be based on a combination of physical ability, mental training, and suitability.

The fact that females formed two-thirds to three-fourths, and in some places as high as nine-tenths, of the total number of factory workers by 1850 spurred the reformers to examine this phenomenon. They were appalled at the thirteen to fourteen hour-day, lower wages for women who worked along side men, and the feudal manner in which she was controlled in the factory. The application of the male despotism of the home to the factory compounded the situation by divorcing women from the family economic unit. She no longer worked beside her husband

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[20]Brown, pp. 24-27; Fuller, Writings, p. 214; Wollstonecraft, p. 163.

and children, but for a cold impersonal institution, the factory, the school district, or the bank. Furthermore, the law allowed her husband to collect her wages and spend them without her consent. The reformers fought for equal pay for women who did the same work as men, for wages based on performance instead of physiological differences which had not been established.[21] This attempt to prevent a double standard in American economy failed. Although the wages of women remained below those paid to men, by 1900 some two-thirds of the states gave them complete control over their earnings outside the home. The low wages and harsh working conditions forced them to join men in strikes or conduct their own strikes, and to develop an abiding distrust of male-dominated factories. When the Knights of Labor removed sexual restrictions on membership in 1869, the common cause of male and female wage-earners was established.

The "kept woman" represented the idle and extravagant economic parasite who lived off men and contributed nothing to the livelihood of mankind. Should one provider die, she legally prostituted herself to another, for she had little of the sympathy which brought two lovers together to face the uncertainties of life. The alienation of this woman from the rapidly emerging industrial order left her helpless in the modern era of uncertain fortunes. Suppose her husband died, reflected Mary Wollstonecraft, what would she do who had guaged her life to please him and always relied on his reason? Her inability to face the problems of life would turn her sons against her, and the revival of

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[21]Grimke, pp. 50, 54.

of her coquetry would make her younger daughters bitter rivals. A fortune hunter would probably marry her and squander her inheritance, leaving her destitute. Based on a naive certainty of tomorrow, the kept woman concept made little provision for disasters. Economic independence and equality would prepare her for possible future uncertainties, said the reformer.[22]

Steady pressure from women allowed them to enter more occupations outside the home in increasing numbers as the century progressed. Margaret Fuller coedited The Dial with Ralph Waldo Emerson and in 1845 became the literary critic and the first woman on the staff of Horace Greeley's Tribune. Sarah J. Hale edited the flourishing Godey's Lady's Magazine while other women successfully edited and published the Pittsburg Visiter /sic/, The Lily, and the Woman's Advocate. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), which was translated into many languages and supposedly helped to bring on the Civil War. Lydia Sigourney was the darling of the sentimentalists, and Elizabeth Blackwell broke the male hegemony of the medical profession.[23] There were others like Miriam F. Leslie who took over her husband's magazine after his death and brought it from an indebtedness of $300,000 to a high level of success; Henrietta H. R. Green who manipulated her stock holdings from $10,000,000 to over $100,000,000; and Lydia E. Pinkham who invented,

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[22]Ibid., p. 54; Fuller, Writings, p. 206; Wollstonecraft, pp. 55-57.

[23]Arguments for female doctors can be found in The Ladies' Medical Oracle; or, Mrs. Mott's Advice to Young Females, Wives, and Mothers (Boston, 1834), and J. Cordy Jeaffreson, A Book About Doctors (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1861).

patented, and successfully market a famous tonic for female ailments.

No Special Political Sphere (Political Reform)

The subjugating effect of civil inferiority which reached all areas of woman's life spurred reformers to agitate for political equality. However, before the 1848 Seneca Falls political convention, they discussed the whys more than the techniques to effect them.

In the 1790's they deplored the absence of liberty and equality in the Constitution. By passing over women as if they did not exist, wrote Brown in Alcuin, it gave them as much political existence as domesticated animals. It certainly insulted liberty, freedom, and democracy in their true meaning by refusing women political existence. If they had different physiques, minds, and virtues, in short, different ways of life, wrote Brown, a separate system of government was needed, for the constitution gave men a political monopoly.[24]

The principle of 1776 upheld the right of those who were subject to laws to enact them. The showers of platitudes which disguised the pretences to equality and liberty in the United States convinced even those who could not meet the voting or office requirements that such was part of liberty and democracy. The environmentalists warned men not to relax as civil disobedience was rapidly becoming an ideal for those who had no part in law-making.[25]

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[24]Wright, p. 154; Brown, pp. 51-53; Wendell Phillips repeated this argument years later. See his Speeches, Lectures, and Letters (2d series; Boston: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company, 1891), p. 114.

[25]Brown, pp. 54, 55, 57; Grimke, p. 74.

In the United States all sovereignty rested with the people, hence the majority theoretically ruled. But the opposite prevailed. Women, one-half of the country, could not vote; the feudal law prohibited minors from participating in government; the poor could not meet the tax or property qualifications; and slaves did not have the right of free men. A majority of the remaining minority elected the office holders. I get tired of explaining our "charming system" of independence and equality, exclaimed Mrs. Carter to Alcuin. As a woman, she was not happy with this "scheme of government" which classed her with "dogs and swine."[26]

Like the slave in the South, women were counted to swell the number of legislators who governed her with little reference to her desires. Society had to protect itself against the irresponsible criminal, the insane, and the child, said Mrs. Carter, but the purely physical nature of sex was an illogical barrier to the franchise. The injustice would be the same if the law excluded from politics all who had a mole on their right cheek or were shorter than five feet five inches. The injury was greater in the case of women, for they made up one-half of the community.[27]

To those who claimed politics would do irrepairable damage to the ideal image of women, the environmentalist said, well and good. The image was only a prejudice written into etiquette books anyway; a better one would eventually emerge.[28]

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[26]Brown, pp. 58, 59; Grimke, p. 74.

[27]Brown, pp. 66-67.

[28]Phillips, pp. 128-138.

After the democratic movements of the 1820's virtually abolished the religious and property qualifications for voting, the reformers brought to fruition the major political achievement by women in the nineteenth century. Their battle against male prejudice, which considered it worse for an intelligent woman to enter public life than to discover that no God existed, reached a climax in 1840 at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. Among the American women delegates who were refused admission to the convention were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who vowed to leave no stone unturned when they returned to the United States to organize a formal political organization for women.[29] In 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York, they opened the militant woman's rights convention and announced their Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions.

Closely paralleling the Declaration of Independence, the reformers announced it was time for women to assume equality with the other half of the human race. The reasons for this were simple. Certain truths were self-evident: all men and women were created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights and that governments which derived their power from the consent of the governed were instituted to secure these rights. But throughout the history of the world, men had sought to establish an absolute tyranny over woman, depriving her of her inalienable rights and proper function in government.

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[29]Herbert Aptheker (ed.), A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States (New York: The Citadel Press, 1951), pp. 196-198; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda J. Gage, History of Woman Suffrage (Rochester, New York: Charles Mann, 1887), pp. 50-62.

He had taken away her citizenship, franchise, and representation in the legislative halls. He compelled her to obey laws in whose formation she had no voice. He refused to give her civil existence after marriage, bestowed her property and wages on himself, physically chastened her, compelled an oath of obedience at marriage from her, made her morally irresponsible as she could commit crimes with impunity in his presence, gave the guardianship of children to him, and, if she were single, taxed her property for the support of the government. Economically, he monopolized nearly all the occupations of wealth and distinction. Educationally, he refused her a thorough education, and religiously relegated her to a subordinated position in the church. He upheld a double standard of morality and violated the will of God and her conscience by assigning her a separate sphere of action. In every possible way he tried to destroy her self-respect and force her to lead a dependent and abject life.

The platform committed the movement to abolish all legal disabilities against women. Therefore it would agitate for equality in the true sense of the word, publicize the conspiracies of men against women, require a single standard of virtue for the sexes, gain the right for women to speak in public, abolish the sphere of woman, campaign for the right to vote, and overthrow all barriers against women in religion and the various occupations. Among the techniques to be used were lecturers, tracts, petitions to state and national legislatures, the pulpit, the press, conventions, men, and all other appropriate devices.[30]

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[30]Littell's Living Age, XVIII (August 1848), 423-424. For information on similar conventions see New York Daily Times, August 16,

With a political organization and platform behind them, the reformers gained the right for women to vote in school elections (Kansas, 1861); in local bond issues, taxation questions, and elections in various places in the United States; and the right to vote in all elections in the territories of Wyoming and Utah in 1869. Colorado (1893), Idaho (1896), Washington (1910), and California (1911) pioneered in female suffrage. Finally, after a bitter struggle, equal suffrage was written into the Constitution on August 6, 1920.

Reformation of Negro Slavery

Once women realized the deadening effects which Negro slavery had on both black and white women, they left their homes to change the environment of the Negro slave in hopes he would reach the civilized level of most Americans.[31] They organized schools for Negro children

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1855, p. 1 and New York Daily Tribune, October 17, 1851, August 16, 1855, p. 4. For a typical argument for feminine suffrage see Phillips, pp. 110-138. For the conservative view see John Quincy Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of his Diary from 1795 to 1848, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1876), X, 36-37; Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1883), XIV, 455; Daniel Webster, The Works of Daniel Webster (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), VI, 105-106; Horace Bushnell, Women's Suffrage, the Reform Against Nature (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1869), pp. 9-11, 49-51; James Fenimore Cooper, The American Democrat (reprinted from the 1838 edition; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), p. 38; Niles Register (April 5, 1828), p. 100.

[31]Lydia Maria Child, An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans (New York: John S. Taylor, 1836), pp. 22-31; Channing, p. 344; Harriet Martineau, Retrospect of Western Travel (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1838), I, 262-266; Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom (New York: Mitler, Orton and Mulligan, 1855), pp. 125-126, 149-150; American Anti-Slavery Society, American Slavery as it is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), pp. 55, 59, 22-24, 180-181, 12, 61, 172, 79; Liberty Chimes (Providence: Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, 1845) is a

like that by Prudence Crandall in Canterbury, Connecticut. When men gave them a secondary role in the abolition movement, they formed Female Anti-Slavery Societies in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston in 1833, the National Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1837, and attended world anti-slavery conventions. Harriet Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin was the best anti-slavery novel. Women orators stirred up sectional hatred during the Kansas-Nebraska war in the 1850's, stood behind efforts to organize the Republican Party in 1854, and enthusiastically supported the Civil War. From 1861 to 1865 they ran the Women Nurses, the U. S. Sanitary Commission, the Woman's Central Relief Association, Soldiers' Aid Societies, and Soldiers' Homes and Rest Stations at important railroad stations, conducted fund raising drives, and joined the army and fought the rebels. Dr. Mary Walker was even decorated by Congress for performing surgery under fire during the war.

No Special Legal Sphere

When women learned the substance of the slave laws, they became pungently aware of their own legal disabilities. Slavery was hereditary and perpetual as was the position of woman; the labor of the slave was compulsory and uncompensated as was hers; and the inability of the slave to make contracts, own property or collect wages resembled that of hers. The slave was prohibited from testifying against a white man, could be punished at the discretion of his master, could not redeem himself, and was unprotected in his domestic relations. Woman suffered from a

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collection of essays on what women can do to help the abolition movement.

similar fate. Laws hindered manumission of slaves even when masters wished to free them; and laws blocked efforts of any husband who wished to elevate his wife to equality. The whole legal structure encouraged degradation of both woman and slave. As a result of a double legal standard governing society, what was considered trifling for a white man might cost the life of a slave. Women suffered similarly for imitating masculine behavior.[32] The desire to end all forms of slavery--negro and female--launched women on the road to legal reform.

This reform had as many chuck-holes as the struggle for suffrage.[33] By the end of the century a number of gains had been made. Three states, Mississippi, Oregon, and Washington, removed all the legal disabilities of wives while in most other states they could sue, be sued, own, control, or dispose of property, make contracts, and retain their wages without interference from their husbands. A number of states gave equal guardianship of children to husbands and wives. In the Dakotas, Georgia, Louisiana, New Mexico, and California, the law made the husband head of the household and the wife subject to him. Stringent divorce laws began to crack, especially those that gave a wife's property to the husband when he divorced her for adultery. Laws which limited the number of hours a woman could work in one day began in 1867 in Wyoming and by 1907 some twenty states had such laws. The court case of Muller vs. Oregon (1907) upheld their constitutionality. The first woman who passed a state bar examination and practiced law was

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[32]Child, An Appeal . . ., pp. 41-75.

[33]Grimke, pp. 74-76, 78, 80-81.

Arabella Mansfield in Iowa in 1869. By 1900 many legal inequalities still existed but the twentieth century would see them fall one by one.

Reform of Marriage

Most societies remained undecided as to whether marriage was a union of souls or merely a contract of convenience and utility, said the reformers. They overlooked the fact that marriage was nothing more than the mode of "sexual intercourse" sanctioned by law or custom in any country. The outward forms might vary from polyandry to monogamy to polygamy, but had little effect on its essential nature, for in the eastern countries where polygamy was legally established marriage was well known. For the reformer all the modes of sexual intercourse which could ever exist were encompassed in the general term marriage.[34]

Custom and law confused the real reason for marriage by adding nonessentials such as the ownership of property, social status, and vows of obedience. Would its essence change, asked the reformers, if the man instead of the woman took the vow of obedience, or if no vows were required, or if conjugal duties did not require them to sleep in the same bed or live in the same house, or if civil instead of religious authority performed the ceremony?[35] As a union of bodies and feelings,

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[34]Wollstonecraft, p. 194; William Dunlap, The Life of Charles Brockden Brown, together with Selections from the Rarest of his Printed Works, from his Original Letters, and from his Manuscripts before Unpublished (Philadelphia: James P. Parker, 1815, on microfilm, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1963), pp. 92, 93, 104; Grimke, pp. 86, 87, 88; Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, p. 47; Fuller, Writings, p. 216.

[35]Dunlap, pp. 104-105.

marriage relegated these to an insignificant role. By mixing a little mind with the animal, the Creator required the passion be given a human and divine form before it could be called a sacred institution. Hence to give all the conceivable forms of sexual intercourse the appellation of marriage would pervert its essence, said the environmentalists. The intercourse founded on free and mutual consent, friendship, personal fidelity, and spontaneity deserved the title of love irrespective of what appendages might be added. Nevertheless, society forced too many persons to marry wealth and fame before the person.[36]

The reformers discovered that custom established the institutional form of marriage regardless of its essence. However, the changing nature of custom left any form of matrimony on a precarious footing; in a hundred years a new mode might replace the present one. What should be done in the light of the changing forms of marriage? One author proposed abolishing its institutional form and letting the individual make his own arrangements for intercourse, the management of property, and the care of children. Another person advocated state care for children, and Robert Dale Owen proposed "trial marriages." "Free love" made little headway among the environmentalists, although it was not without its followers in the nineteenth century. John Humphrey Noyes introduced group marriage in Oneida, New York, Joseph Smith, Jr. experimented with polygamy in Nauvoo, Illinois, as alternatives to the accepted forms, and Victoria Woodhull championed free love in her Woodhull and Chaflin's Weekly established in 1870.

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[36] Ibid.

However, most of the reformers accepted monogamy as the most advanced connubial state and believed all other forms tended toward it. They hastened to add that spurious additions by custom, accident, and "iniquitous laws" made even monogamy a "compact of slavery." Even it needed reforming.[37]

Margaret Fuller delineated several approaches to monogamous intercourse which were adapted to the various needs and desires of women and men. In other words, not every person should be forced into the same marriage mold. In the household partnership the woman looked for an intelligent and kind man who wanted a capable and well-tempered woman. Living in mutual esteem and dependence, he provided for the house, and she governed it. They talked about their household business, for life went more smoothly and cheerfully with the aid of the other. Their affection showed itself by practical kindnesses--she praised him for being a good provider, and he complimented her excellent housekeeping. Their grateful relation was good as far as it went, she said.

Marriage could also be one of mutual idolatry in which the partners preferred to leave the glories of the world around them to dwell in a cell together. In this they weakened and narrowed one another. Convinced of their superior wisdom, the man gloried in his lovely nymph, and the woman in her masculine hero. This infatuation decimated the human character by turning the wife into an "unlovely syren" and the husband into an "effeminate boy."

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[37] Ibid., pp. 96, 104; Wollstonecraft, p. 77; Louis Martin Sears, "Some Correspondence of Robert Dale Owen," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, X (December 1925), 313.

In the intellectual companionship, the husbands engaged in the arts, literature, learning, and public life, and the wives were their confidants in thought and feeling. This harmony of minds encouraged a wider intellectual development for the wives, which in some cases enabled them to enter the same occupation as their husbands. Intellectual companionship offered these women of rich intellectual consciousness, clear-sightedness, deep affections, tender sympathies, genius, and high virtue an escape from the unbearably narrow straits of the old sphere. As partners in work and life, they shared public and private interests on equal terms with their husbands. They knew love in name only as their marriage culminated a friendship based on esteem. Here they met mind to mind in mutual trust which gave them strength to withstand overwhelming odds.[38]

The highest form of marriage was the religious union. It encompassed the union of "household sympathies"--for each had to assist the other along the dusty road of life--and the "intellectual communion" --for a community of feeling was needed to transmit the glorious insights which scintillated the soul on its journey home. The husband and wife were not copies of each other but originals who loved and honored each other. Each thought his own thoughts and considered himself the brother, sister, helper and friend of his partner.[39] As self-centered, rather than man-centered, she travelled to her ultimate destiny without letting

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[38]Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 27-30, 31-32; Wollstonecraft, pp. 156-157 gives a brief description of this type of monogamous marriage.

[39]Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 32-33.

one relationship absorb her. Marriage was only one of many experiences in life, and love for a man was a part of the universal love which encircled humanity before mounting gratefully to God. She never belonged to her husband, but formed a whole union with him. Ever a virgin mind, life was a great adventure. Neither she nor he lightly entered this close union with the other who would affect their eternal growth or carelessly take the marriage vows if they could not perform the duties of a friend.

Equality in marriage implied that a difference of opinion might exist when problems confronted the husband and wife. Someone had to make the final decision.[40] Under the innatist system, the man had the final word in all disputes and, should his wife break the vow of obedience, he could restrain her with brute force, artifice, or legal punishment. The environmentalists proposed several alternatives. First, either partner could be given the ultimate power to decide as long as the other had a fair hearing. Second, neither husband nor wife should be compelled to give in, but could sacrifice what he or she deemed right for the sake of unity. Third, domestic difficulties could be submitted to mutually chosen arbitrators, except legal tribunes which existing laws prejudiced. Last, the reformers believed the members of a dispute would form similar conclusions if the freest exchange of interests, ideas, and sentiments abound in an atmosphere of confidence and love. As long as the laws of heaven existed as their guide, the moral judgment of one would not be binding on both. For example, she

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[40] Ibid., p. 47; Wollstonecraft, pp. 75, 130, 193.

could join the anti-slavery or prohibition movement, and her husband who would have the same intellectual and spiritual insight would approve. By this reasoning the environmentalists convinced themselves that two married people could think and act individually but with a great degree of harmony.[41]

Although most women continued to live for marriage, a novel departure occurred in 1855 when Lucy Stone married Henry Brown Blackwell. By mutual consent she kept her maiden name, thus establishing the precedent for women to use theirs in business or the professions. She also refused to take the vow of obedience, but promised to love and honor her husband. Furthermore, Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell jointly issued a "Protest" against the existing marriage rules and customs. They agreed to oppose the legal degradation of woman incurred at marriage until such time as the law recognized the married woman as "an independent, rational being" with equal human rights. Marriage, they said, was "an equal and permanent partnership."[42]

Divorce Reform

When marriage lost its spontaneity and personal fidelity, the best solution was divorce, instead of the present arrangement which favored the husband, said the reformers. If he ceased to love his wife he could escape a disagreeable home situation by visiting his club,

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[41]Dunlap, pp. 92, 95-96; Grimke, pp. 86, 87.

[42]A copy of the "Protest" can be found in the New York Daily Tribune, May 4, 1855, p. 6. For their wedding date see the May 3, 1855 edition, p. 7. The Ladies' Repository, XVII (1857), 61 condemned the practice of women not changing their last names at marriage.

saloon, or mistress. As long as he gave his family a bare subsistence his reputation remained intact. This independence in the choice of friends, occupation, and use of leisure time allowed him the fruits of the divorced state while still married.[43]

Severe restrictions were placed on the wife in such matters should her husband's kindness, patience, and understanding turn to insolence, peevishness, and despotism. The injustice of the system, said Mrs. Carter in Alcuin, subjected a wife to the control and "nauseous caresses" of him whose love had died or whom she had come to despise. It inflicted a misery for which there was no compensation; no other form of injustice was more ugly and detestable. The husband who associated with his wife contrary to his judgment and inclination paid her little compliment, she continued, as the law and social pressure did not compell him to disguise his hatred or restrain his treatment of her. She was subjected to him and to his demands at any time and place. Her friendships, acts of charity, and solitary moments had to have his approval. Reason and justice, said the reformers, demanded that divorce relieve the estrangement of persons or the same privileges of unfaithfulness should be extended to the wife as to the husband. What was virtuous and good for a husband, they argued, should be the same for the wife. Otherwise divorce was the only logical solution.[44]

The reformers confined divorce to those marriages in which reconciliation was impossible. In most cases constant companions

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[43]Dunlap, p. 89.

[44]Ibid., pp. 96-98, 102.

became more alike, thus inseparable. However the progressive nature of human beings necessitated a means to terminate the marriages of the few who failed to change at approximately the same rate of speed. Also children benefited more from divorce than in a home rife with quarrels and bitter feelings, or where they were the pawns in battles of spite between husband and wife. Once the parents were freed from bickering and tormenting each other, they would, in general, make better provision for the children, said the reformer. Their parental duties would continue for neither the natural ties of offspring nor the property of the parents were annihilated by divorce.[45]

They refused the black picture painted by those who claimed licentiousness and profligacy would follow the making and breaking of marriage at pleasure. The incessant changes of partners would destroy physical and mental chastity, bring about a general corruption of manners, and pave the way for a thousand other vices. Society would then enter the last stage of degeneration, it was said. The reformers believed more liberal divorce laws would immeasurably increase the happiness of mankind by ending the debasement of woman and stabilizing the natural affections which would check irrational changing of partners. Only a few reformers followed Theophilos R. Gates to the radical position of freedom of divorce.[46]

Although the reformers failed to get uniform divorce laws for

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[45] Ibid., pp. 99-101, 103.

[46] Ibid.; William Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness, ed. F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), II, 506-509.

the nation or abolish the state laws which punished women more than men in divorce cases, they did expand the reasons for divorce beyond the older ones of adultery, desertion, extreme cruelty, and impotency.[47] The few states which required an act of the legislature for divorce gradually diminished, and the divorce rate increased at nearly three times that of the general population growth. By 1900 one divorce was granted for every twelve marriages. Founded in 1881, the National Divorce Reform League helped to coordinate some of these divorce reform activities. The anonymity of urban life, increased apartment dwelling, temptations of the city, harsh living conditions, and new economic opportunities for women helped the process along. Most of all the increasing pressure to widen woman's sphere necessarily focussed on marriage, the principle agency which circumscribed her role in society. Last, it probably reflected increasing self-respect of women who refused to put up with the conditions and masculine behavior tolerated by their mothers. As a result of the above, nearly two-thirds of the divorces in the late nineteenth century were requested by women, and the percentage increased in the next century.

Birth Control

The reformers advocated a rational and scientific control of the number of offspring without sacrificing the pleasure of sexual

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[47]For a list and explanation of these reasons for divorce, see Samuel S. Smith, The Lectures, Corrected and Improved . . . on the Subjects of Moral and Political Philosophy (Trenton: Daniel Fenton, 1812), I, 127-141; see sections on divorce in Amos Dean, Principles of Medical Jurisprudence (Albany: Fould, Banks and Co., 1854) and Alfred S. Taylor, Medical Jurisprudence, ed. with notes and add., R. Egglesfield Griffith (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845).

gratification. Women needed some kind of family planning if they were to develop their minds, travel, write, preserve their health, be the biological companions to their husbands they should be, and help reform society. To the reformers, a houseful of babies destroyed the dignity of woman. The more that women recognized the direct connection between the development of their capacities and the size of the family, the more they supported birth control measures. Robert Dale Owen accurately expressed their ideas when he said that only birth control would guarantee the equality of the sexes. If women had to be either nuns or mothers, they would always be slaves to sex and grieviously suffer both physical and mental degradation. Nothing short of control over the reproductive system would relieve woman of sexual slavery, he wrote.[48]

In the absence of scientific knowledge about how and when conception occurred, the suggestions on how to prevent it at one's discretion varied greatly. Mary Wollstonecraft told women if they nursed their children through the natural cycle of nature the interval between each child would prevent a houseful of babies and would preserve their health. Others suggested abstinence, ejecting the semen from the womb, the use of sponges, "clever" potions, and alkaline lotions. One novel suggestion recommended too frequent intercourse to make the womb torpid, hence unable to conceive. This undoubtedly came from the widely accepted belief that the frequent sexual activities of prostitutes rendered them sterile.[49]

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[48]Sears, p. 313.

[49]Wollstonecraft, p. 211; Charles Knowlton, Fruits of Philosophy, eds. Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant (New York: The Truth

For all practical purposes the American birth control movement got its impulse from Francis Place and his disciples who encouraged the practice of contraceptives in England and the United States. In the latter country, such works as Moral Physiology (1830) by Robert Dale Owen and Fruits of Philosophy (1832) pioneered contraceptive measures. Bronson Alcott braved public opinion by teaching sex education in his Temple School in Boston during the 1830's, and the Oneida Community practiced restricted procreation in its free intercourse system--even used selective breeding to perpetuate its membership.

Women joined the birth control movement in the nineteenth century the more they desired a broader life and gained economic independence. As social restraints were loosed which muffled their impulses for self-expression, the more they said about when and how many children to have. The growing demand for birth control information led to numerous organizations and such outstanding leaders in the twentieth century as Margaret Sanger, who disseminated these facts and fought the legal and religious prohibitions against these activities. The entire movement seemed permeated by Charles Knowlton's statement that free-born men had the right to know as much about their bodies as possible if they were to use them correctly.[50]

Seeker Co., n.d.), pp. 47-51; /John Stewart/, The Revelation of Nature with the Prophesy of Reason (New York: Mott and Lyon, 1796), pp. 60-83, in EAI no. 31238; Mary S. Gove, Lectures to Women on Anatomy and Physiology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1846), pp. 173-176; Robert Dale Owen, Moral Physiology (10th ed.; New York: G. Vale, n.d.), pp. 13-18.

[50]Knowlton, p. 12.

Educational Reform

A look at woman's education convinced the reformers that renovation was also overdue here. They proposed the same education for the sexes since they were mentally equal, knowledge was non-sexed, and study would not damage woman's brain or body. It was necessary if she were to compete with men in any occupation, be a good public servant, develop an excellent character, cultivate virtue, live by true religion, properly educate children, and regenerate the world. The ability to make one generation different from a previous one through education convinced the environmentalists that better-educated women would accelerate the progress of mankind.[51]

All men might be born free and equal, reasoned Frances Wright, but they could not live as equals unless they were educated as equals. Until the children of the banker, governor, and president went to school with those of the farmer, mechanic, and apprentice, Americans would never be equal, free, or "republicans." Identical instruction would guarantee human rights, democracy, and equality. Without it there could be no liberty! If the American republic were to prevail, knowledge had to be universalized instead of monopolized by a few people, and aristocratic education with its private colleges and female finishing schools which choked the life out of a democracy would have to disappear. Those

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[51]James Armstrong Neal, An Essay on the Education and Genius of the Female Sex (Philadelphia, 1795), pp. 5, 8-9, 13, in EAI no. 29135; Grimke, p. 34; Brown, pp. 36-42; Dunlap, pp. 83-86; Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 34-36. The need for better female education received the support of such men as James Madison, Letters and Other Writings of James Madison (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1865), III, 232.

who justified private schools as the best place to produce "great men" to guide society misunderstood human nature, wrote one reformer. Should more reason and virtue prevail in society, fewer and fewer crises would arise, hence the need for "great men" diminish.[52]

After rehearsing the evils of private schools, the reformers prescribed public tax-supported co-education as the best educational system for a republic. In these schools, women would work beside men in the quest for knowledge and its application. The teacher would be free from the patronage of the parents, and the use of the scientific method would foster a spirit of fearless inquiry in place of authoritarian opinions. The pupils would learn to examine both sides of a question, collect facts beyond what the teacher and book had to offer, do their own thinking, and form their own conclusions. The spread of free inquiry would stop religious obscurantism, the one-sided lawyer, the partisan newspaper, and turn the sectional politician into a national legislator. More and more the difficulties would be removed from the path of future generations.[53]

Women like Fuller and Wollstonecraft called for aggressive perceptive leaders to step forth and legislate the overthrow of "exclusive colleges, paltry common schools, ignorant sunday schools, and sectarian churches." They wanted the wealth of the nation to be used for

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[52]Wright, pp. 45-48; Wollstonecraft, p. 179.

[53]Wright, pp. 37-38, 80-81, 89-91; Wollstonecraft, see chapter XII on National Education. An opposite view is contained in "On Female Education," The Port Folio (April 1824), pp. 239-240. Textbooks were still being written to suit woman's "sexual" mind. One of these was William Russell and Anna U. Russell, Introduction to the Young Ladies' Elocutionary Reader (new ed.; Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1851).

democratic libraries, excellent teachers of science, and town halls where the citizens, women and men, could study and discuss social and national interests.[54]

The first advances in women's education came in 1821 when Emma Willard opened Troy Female Seminary. Although it fell short of its aim to give women a college education equal to that received by men, Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (1837) improved upon this early effort.[55] Together they paved the way for a rash of women's colleges--Vassar (1865), Smith (1875), Wellesley (1875), Radcliffe (1879), and Bryn Mawr (1885). A second type of seminary opened in 1823 under the direction of Catharine Beecher. The Hartford Female Seminary recognized that innate sexual differences existed between the sexes hence sought to keep female college training within these bounds. The two trends in female seminaries had an ambivalent influence on the woman's movement. Both supported mental equality of the sexes, but by building separate educational institutions for women, they implicitly said intrinsic differences separated the sexes. At the same time they believed in the moral superiority of women, hence contributed substantially to feminism--the belief in the superiority of women.

Co-education which promised to implement the environmentalists' ideas of equality first appeared in 1833 at Oberlin College, which also

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[54]Wright, pp. 46, 80-81, 124-125; Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, p. 34.

[55]The Power of Christian Benevolence Illustrated in the Life and Labors of Mary Lyon (new ed., abridged and enlarged; New York: American Tract Society, 1858), pp. 146-147.

gave the first college B.A. degrees--tangible evidence of equality--to women. It spread to Antioch (1852) and Iowa University (1856) before the Civil War. The latter was the beginning of tax supported public education for both sexes. By 1870 the universities of Michigan, Illinois, and Ohio State abolished restrictions against admitting women, and by the end of the century many colleges admitted both sexes on an equal footing. With their college training, women flocked into the teaching profession where their mental equality with men was first recognized. Unable to overcome the stigma attached to feminine craftsmanship, their wages remained lower than men's for the same work. In spite of the inequalities which existed, many of its educational reforms demanded by women were achieved by 1900. However the trend of co-education probably convinced more people of the environmentally-shaped nature of women than any other event.

Other Reforms

As the exodus of women from the home increased, their energies were absorbed in more and more reform activities. They joined men in Magdalen societies to rehabilitate prostitutes, repudiated the double standard, and fought attempts to give legal sanction to the business of prostitution. The passage of the White Slave Act in 1910 resulted partly from their agitation.[56]

In the area of clothing, they led anti-corset, anti-bustle, and

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[56]The American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany, XI (1849), 228. This article on economic causes for prostitution was reprinted from the New York Daily Tribune; Phillips, p. 123.

anti-hoop-skirt campaigns without much success. Some advances were made in the latter part of the century in the form of the tailored suit which had a mannish look to it, shirt waist and shorter skirts, and even a divided skirt. After the turn of the century, they dropped the many petticoats, raised the skirt, cut their long hair, and refused to wear large hats. All this was prelude to the dress revolution of the 1920's.

Julia Ward Howe stood head and shoulders above all women in the peace movement. In 1872 she invited women of all nations to meet in London to promote universal peace. The meeting was a failure. The next effort came in 1895 when the Women's Peace League was established. As commendable as these efforts were, the majority of feminine peace reformers preferred to join the Universal Peace Union, a male organization. By the end of the century, they outnumbered the men in this organization. Fanny B. Ames pioneered in charity organizations, and later Louise L. Schuyler founded the New York State Charities Aid Association. Clara Barton organized the American National /Red Cross/ Society while other women worked for prison and legal reforms, formed societies to help the blind, feeble-minded, and lame. Jane Addams and Ellen G. Starr taught Americans the value of settlement houses. Florence Kelley organized Consumers' Leagues while other women worked to abolish sweat shops, obtain playgrounds for a better day environment for children, and establish public parks. Dorothea Dix pioneered better treatment for the insane in the United States. Her vision was not lost to generations of Americans after her death.

When women were not campaigning for libraries, kindergartens,

or better treatment of animals, they joined the National Women's Christian Temperance Union founded in 1874 by Frances Willard. Again the idea was the same. A moral reformation of society was needed to rid the environment of the saloon, the den of putrid iniquity, end the debauchery of children exposed to drink during their tender years, stop the brutalization of the wife by the drunken husband, cut off this source of poverty in many homes, block the road to crime and even insanity caused by drink.

The great achievement of women in the nineteenth century was their club movement. In these gatherings they evaded domestic responsibilities while learning the arts of organization, leadership, and persistent pressure for civic and humanitarian changes. Late in the eighteenth century they had engaged in charity work, but it was sponsored and directed by men. After the Civil War, they formed exclusive female clubs which by 1889 were joined in the General Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1904 Sarah Decker, president of the Federation, gave it a reform tone when she told women it was time to stop studying Dante's inferno and turn their attention to their own.

Conclusion

The early woman's movement succeeded by developing a different concept of human nature from the current one of innatism. By challenging the belief in the predestined and different character traits and mental capacities of each sex, the environmentalist was forced to work out the logical consequences of this pillar-idea. Once he recognized the over-whelming influence of the environment in determining

the personality, he was forced, by conviction, to alter the external world until its influences reacted favorably on a person. In this he actively opposed all "evil" forces, or he refused to leave things to a supposed natural law of determinism. These reformers saw themselves in league with God who had told mankind to "conquer and subdue" the earth.

The souls of the early reforming environmentalists were thrilled by the promise of their new found theory. No longer did evil seem impregnable and everlasting. Man, like God, now held the key in his hands to eradicate evil. What glories must have enraptured those early thinkers who saw every lecture, book, and organization as another step towards a better world. This was the great hope, the great anticipation, and overpowering faith of the early woman's movement.

Like the rest of Western Civilization, the mores governing women tossed to and fro under the impact of a new pillar-idea and rocked frantically as the ideological earthquake worked its way into the daily lives of mankind.

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