

The SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE SECTION

A Magazine for your Reading Table

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS' PAGE



Cardinal James Gibbons

STATESWOMEN VERSUS CHURCHWOMEN

By CARDINAL JAMES GIBBONS

THE WORLD is governed more by ideals than by ideas; it is influenced more by living, concrete models than by abstract principles of virtue.

The model held up to Christian women is not the Amazon, glorying in her martial deeds and prowess; it is not the Spartan woman, who made female perfection consist in the development of physical strength at the expense of feminine decorum and modesty; it is not the goddess of pagan love, like Venus, whose votaries regarded beauty of form and personal charms as the highest type of female excellence; nor is it an imperious Juno. No; the model held up to woman from the very dawn of Christianity is the peerless Mother of our Blessed Redeemer. She is the pattern of virtue alike to maiden, wife and mother. She exhibits the virginal modesty becoming the maid, the conjugal fidelity and loyalty of the spouse, and the untiring devotion of the mother.

The Sexes Equal Now and Hereafter

WOMAN'S origin and destiny are the same as man's; so is her dignity equal in every way. As both were redeemed by the same Lord and as both aspire to the same heavenly inheritance, so should they be regarded as of equal rank on earth; as they are partakers of the same spiritual gifts, so should they share alike the blessings and prerogatives of domestic life.

In the mind of the Catholic Church, however, equal rights do not imply that both sexes should engage promiscuously in the same pursuits, but rather that each sex should discharge those duties which are adapted to its physical constitution and sanctioned by the canons of society.

To some among the gentler sex the words, "equal rights," have been, it is to be feared, synonymous with "similar rights."

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Suffrage, or the right to vote, and the right to hold office, are ambitions which some women have, that are really rights of *similarity* and not of *equality*. Seeking these so-called rights alienate the feminine spirit from its foreordained and guarded haven—the home.

To debar woman from such pursuits as suffrage, or from doing a man's work, or from wearing masculine attire, is not to degrade her.

To restrict her field of action to the gentler avocations of life is not to fetter her aspirations after the higher and the better.

Woman's Supereminent Rights

IT IS, on the contrary, to secure to her not *equal* rights, so-called, but those supereminent rights that can not fail to endow her with a sacred influence in her own proper sphere; for as soon as woman trenches on the domain of man, she must not be surprised to find that the reverence once accorded to her has been, in part, or wholly, withdrawn.

The home—whether that home is a palace or a cottage—exercises more sway in the government of the laud or the uplifting of the people than our houses of Congress and State legislatures. Our President, our statesmen and our judiciary hold the high offices of framing or interpreting or executing the laws. But our Christian women—wives and mothers—hold a higher place, for they mould the character of our statesmen and jurists in their childhood and instil virtue in their hearts. Our greatest statesmen have loudly and unanimously proclaimed their indebtedness to their mothers.

Motherhood Provides the Noblest Work

THE noblest work given to woman is to take care of her children. The most important part of her apostleship should consist in instructing them in the ways of God. The education of the young should begin at the mother's knee. The mind of a child, like softened wax, receives with ease the first impressions, which are always the deepest and most enduring. "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it." I. Peter, II., 2. A child is susceptible of instruction much earlier in life than parents generally imagine. Mothers should watch with a jealous eye the first unfolding of the infant mind, and pour into it the seed of heavenly knowledge.

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