

**The Collected Works
of
Edith Stein**

**Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross
Discalced Carmelite**

ESSAYS ON WOMAN

Second Edition, Revised

Volume Two

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Chapter II

The Separate Vocations of Man and Woman According to Nature and Grace

In everyday usage, the hackneyed word “vocation” retains little of its original connotation. When young people are about to graduate, one wonders what occupation they should pursue; the question whether women should enter the professional life or stay at home has been controversial for some time. Here the term designating vocation does not convey much more than gainful employment. The original meaning of the word survives only in particular allusions, i.e., when one says that a person has missed his vocation or when one speaks of a religious vocation. These idioms signify that a vocation is something to which a person must be *called*.

Yet, what does to be *called* mean? A call must have been sent from someone, to someone, *for something* in a *distinct manner*. We say that a scholar has been appointed to a professorial chair. The offer initiates at an institution through the respective school; it goes to a man who is apparently *called* because of ability and education for that to which he is being called, i.e., to work as scholar and teacher. The offer is made to him by way of an invitation in prescribed or customary linguistic forms. I have most certainly used a peculiar turn of expression here: “he is called to that to which he seems to be called.” According to that, the appointment by a human institution evidently presupposes another call which these people believe recognized and therefore declared “called through ability and education.” He himself and many others worked toward his formation, voluntarily and involuntarily; but it developed on the basis of his *ability* in the deepest sense of the word—all the gifts which he inherited. Thus his call, as well as his vocation—i.e., his works and creations to which he is destined—is prescribed in *human nature*; the course of life fructifies it and renders it recognizable to other people so that they are able to declare the *calling* in which he might happily find *his place* in life. But the *person’s nature* and his *life’s course* are no gift or trick of chance, but—seen with the eyes of faith—the work of God. And thus, finally, it is God Himself who calls. It is He who calls *each* human being to that to which all humanity is called, it is He who calls *each individual* to that to which he or she is called personally, and, over and above

this, He calls *man and woman* as such to something specific as the title of this address indicates. What man and woman are called to does not appear to be easily recognizable, as it has been a controversial subject for some time. And yet there are any number of ways by which we receive this call: God Himself declares it in the words of the Old and New Testament; it is inscribed in the nature of man and woman; history elucidates this matter for us; finally, the needs of our time declare an urgent message. A diversely fibered texture is presented, but the design is not so complex that we may not isolate a few clear lines within it by viewing it clearly and objectively. So we may thus attempt to answer the question: to what are man and woman called?

I

The first passage of the *Bible* which concerns humanity assigns a common vocation to both man and woman. “ ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea and the birds of heaven and over the entire earth and all crawling animals that move upon the earth.’ ”¹ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, He created them as male and female.² And God blessed them and said: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and conquer it, and be masters over the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, and all creatures which move upon the earth.’ ”³

Thus, in the first account of the creation of man, the difference between male and female is immediately proclaimed. But mutually they are given the threefold vocation: they are to be the image of God, bring forth posterity, and be masters over the earth. It is not said here that this threefold vocation is to be effected in different ways by man and woman; at best, this is implied in the quotation cited on the separation of the sexes.

The second passage of Genesis, which deals more extensively with the creation of man, elucidates the question a bit further. It relates the creation of Adam, his placement in the “paradise of bliss” to cultivate and preserve it, and the manner in which the animals were brought to him and received their names from him.⁴ “But no helpmate corresponding to him was found for Adam.”⁵ The Hebrew expression used in this passage is barely translatable⁶—*Eser kenegdo*—which literally means “a helper as if vis-à-vis to him.” One can think here of a mirror in which man is able to look upon his own nature. The translators who speak of a “helpmate suitable to him” perceive it in this way. But one can also think of a counterpart, a *pendant*, so that, indeed, they do resemble each other,

yet not entirely, but rather, that they complement each other as one hand does the other. “And the Lord God said ‘It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate who will suit him.’ ” And the Lord made Adam fall into slumber and took from him one of his ribs and formed a woman from it, and He led her to Adam. “Then Adam declared, ‘This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She is to be called woman, for she was taken from man.’ ⁷ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and adheres to his wife and they both become *one* body.⁸ Now they were both naked, Adam and his wife, but they felt no shame.” ⁹ A certain pre-eminence is indicated in that man was created first. Again, it is from the word of God that we are to understand why it would not have been good for man to be alone. God created man in His own image. But God is *three in one*; and just as the Son issues from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, so, too, the woman emanated from man and posterity from them both. And moreover, God is love. But there must be at least two persons for love to exist (as we are told by St. Gregory in his homily on the mission of the disciples who were dispatched two by two).

It is not a question here of a *sovereignty* of man over woman. She is named as *companion* and *helpmate*, and it is said of man that he will cling to her and that both are to become *one* flesh. This signifies that we are to consider the life of the initial human pair as the most intimate community of love, that their faculties were in perfect harmony as within one single being; likewise, before the Fall, all faculties in each individual were in perfect harmony, senses and spirit in right relation with no possibility of conflict. For this reason, they were also incapable of inordinate desire for one another. This is revealed in the words “They were naked and were not ashamed.”

God’s plan seems essentially altered after the Fall in respect to humanity and the human vocation. Eve had allowed herself to be ensnared by the tempter and had also enticed the man into sin. First Adam is called to account. He laid the blame on the woman: “The woman whom you gave me as companion—she gave me to eat from the tree and I ate.” ¹⁰ At the same time, it sounds like a reproach to God. First Adam is now taken to task: his alibi is not accepted. “... Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, cursed be the soil because of your deed; you shall feed upon it with greatest toil all the days of your life.¹¹ It will bear thorns and thistles for you, and you shall eat the plants of the fields.¹² You shall eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the earth from whence you were taken;

for you are dust and unto dust shall you return.”¹³ Adam’s disobedience is punished by the loss of his undisputed sovereignty over the earth and of the ready service of the lower creatures, by the harsh struggle with them over his daily bread, by the difficulty of his labor and its pitiful reward.

A different judgment is meted out to the woman: “...I will multiply the difficulties of your conceptions; you will give birth to children in suffering and be under the power of your husband and he shall rule over you.”¹⁴ We do not know in what way the blessing of fertility was to be fulfilled in humanity before the Fall. Woman’s labor in childbirth and man’s struggle for existence resulted from the Fall. The woman is punished further by subjugation to the man. That he will not be a good master can be seen in his attempt to shift responsibility for the sin from himself onto his wife. The serene community of love is ended. But something else has emerged of which they were not aware before; they recognize they are naked and they are ashamed. They themselves tried to hide their nakedness and God provided for them: “And the Lord God made robes from skins for Adam and his wife and so clothed them.”¹⁵ Concupiscence has awakened in them, and it has become necessary to guard them from it.

Thus there has been a change in the relationship of human beings to the earth, to their descendants and to one another. But all this is the result of a changed relation to God. The narration on the creation and Fall of man is full of mysteries which cannot be resolved here. But it is indeed not presumptuous to discuss a few questions which emerge and to try to answer them. Why was it forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge? What kind of fruit was it that the woman ate and gave her husband to eat? And why did the tempter approach the woman first? Of course, man was evidently not without knowledge before the Fall—he who was created according to God’s image, who gave names to all living creatures, and who was called to rule over the earth. Rather, a much more perfect knowledge can be attributed to him before than after the Fall. Therefore, it must have been a specific knowledge which is the point in question. The devil actually speaks of the knowledge of good and evil. Now, it is also not to be assumed that man lacked knowledge of good before the Fall. Adam and Eve had a more perfect knowledge of God, i.e., a more perfect knowledge of the highest good and, from that, of all particular good. But they were to be kept, no doubt, from that knowledge of evil which one gains in the doing of it.

The direct consequence of original sin gives a clue as to what they may be held accountable for: the consequence was that man and woman saw each other with different eyes than they had previously; they had lost innocence of

interchange with one another. So the first sin may not only be considered as a purely formal one of disobedience to God. Rather it implied a definite act which had been forbidden and which the serpent presented enticingly to the woman and then the woman to the man. Indeed, the act committed could well have been a manner of union which was at variance with the original order. But that the tempter first tempted the woman may signify that he had easier access to her, not that the woman was more easily induced to evil (indeed, both Adam and Eve were still free of an inclination to evil), but because the nature of the temptation was in itself of greater significance for her. From the first it was intended that woman's life would be more strongly affected by procreation and the education of posterity. The difference of punishment for the man and woman is also indicative of this.

According to the biblical text, the loss of their own lives seems to be bound up with the expulsion from Paradise: the Lord pronounces the words to Adam with which He had threatened him from the first as punishment for disobedience: death. But preceding the expulsion, God utters a promise in the judgment meted out to the serpent: "I will set enmity between you and the woman, your offspring and hers; her descendants will tread on your head, and yours will lie waiting for their heel." ¹⁶ The terms "woman" and "offspring" designate the Mother of God and the Redeemer. This, however, does not exclude the other meaning; the first woman, to whom Adam gave the name "mother of all living creatures," as well as all her successors had been given a particular duty to struggle against evil and to prepare for the spiritual restoration of life. "God has given me a son," said Eve, as she gave birth to her first child. That sounds as if she were aware of a blessing to be given to her in the person of her son. And later, the women of Israel also saw their vocation in this way: to bring forth offspring who were to see the day of salvation.

Thus a specific tie is established between the Fall and Redemption, and here and there the facts correspond remarkably. As woman was the first to be tempted, so did God's message of grace come first to a woman, and each time woman's assent determined the destiny of humanity as a whole. In God's new kingdom, the role of the human couple has changed; it has become a relationship of mother and son. The Son of God is the Son of Man through his mother but not through a human father. God's son did not choose the usual way of human propagation to become the Son of Man. Can we not find here an indication that there is a flaw inherent in this fashion of procreation from the first sin, which can only be redeemed by the kingdom of grace? Also, does it not indicate the

nobility of motherhood as the purest and most elevated union of human beings? The distinction of the female sex is that a woman was *the* person who was permitted to help establish God's new kingdom; the distinction of the male sex is that redemption came through the Son of Man, the new Adam. And therein, man's rank of priority is expressed again.

The Lord clearly declared that the new kingdom of God would bring a new order of relationship between the sexes, i.e., it would put an end to the relationships caused by the Fall and would restore the original order.¹⁷ To the Pharisee's question as to whether the husband is allowed to divorce his wife, Jesus answered "Moses permitted you to do so because of the hardness of your hearts. But from the beginning, this was not so." And He rebuked them with the passage from the account of creation: they will be two in one flesh. And He sets the commandment of the New Covenant: "What God has united let man not put asunder." But, moreover, He sets up the ideal of virginity as something entirely new, as it is put before us by the living example of the Virgin-Mother and the Lord Himself.

The letters of St. Paul contain the most detailed remarks on the relationship between man and woman. The much discussed passage of 1 Corinthians reads: "However, what I want you to understand is that Christ is the head of every man, but man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered renders disrespect to his head.¹⁸ But any woman who prays or prophesies with head uncovered shames her head; then it is as if her hair were shaved off....¹⁹ A man should not cover his head, for it is the image and glory of God, but woman is man's glory.²⁰ For man does not come from woman, but woman from man.²¹ For man was not created for the sake of woman but woman for the sake of man....²² Yet in the Lord, man is neither independent of woman nor woman independent of man."²³ We should not be deemed disrespectful to the Apostle if we suggest here that in this instruction to the Corinthians, there is confusion as to the divine and human aspects, the temporal and eternal. Coiffure and clothes are matters of fashion, as even St. Paul says in the close of the passage: "But anyone who may still be inclined to argue knows that we do not have such a custom nor do the churches of God."²⁴ If this judgment regarding the dress to be worn for public worship by the Corinthian women was binding for the community he had founded, that is not to say that by the same token it is also binding for all times.

What he says concerning the main relationship between man and woman

must be evaluated differently, for it is given as interpretation of the divine order in creation and redemption.

Man and woman are destined to live *one* life with one another like a single being. But the leadership in this community of life is proper to the man as the one who was created first. However, one has the impression that the original order and redemptive order are not rendered authentically by the interpretation of St. Paul; on the contrary, in the emphasis of man's sovereignty in the relationship, and absolutely in his postulation of man's role as mediator between the Redeemer and woman, the interpretation is still influenced by the order of fallen nature. Neither the account of creation nor the Gospel alludes to such an indirectness of relationship to God. But it is indeed found in Mosaic law and in Roman justice. Yet the Apostle himself knows another order which he speaks of in the same Letter to the Corinthians when he discusses marriage and virginity: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife..." and "Wife, how do you know that you will not bring your husband to salvation...?"²⁵ This is in accordance with the Gospel which teaches that every soul is won to life by Christ, and everyone who is justified by union with Christ, man or woman, is called to mediation.

The relationship of man and wife is handled even more fully in the Letter to the Ephesians.²⁶ "Wives should yield to their husbands as to the Lord, for the man is his wife's head just as Christ is the head of His Church, the savior of His body."²⁷ But just as the Church is resigned to Christ, so, too, should women be to their husbands in all things.²⁸ Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her²⁹ in order to make her holy, purifying her in a bath of water by the word of life³⁰ in order to present His glorious Church without blemish or wrinkle or any such thing, but rather that she might be holy and immaculate.³¹ So should men also love their wives as their own bodies. Whoever loves his wife loves himself.³² For never has anyone hated his own flesh but rather preserves and attends to it as also Christ does the Church.³³ For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.³⁴ For this reason, a man shall leave his mother and father and shall cling to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.³⁵ But this is a great mystery. I mean to say, of Christ and the Church.³⁶ Nevertheless, each one of you should love his wife as himself; but the woman should stand in awe of her husband."³⁷ This passage explains what the Christian concept of marriage should be. Although the Lord Himself has emphasized the indissolubility of marriage and the unity of the

couple in one flesh, this unity is more closely defined here.

Just as in the single organism all limbs are ruled by the head, thereby maintaining the harmony of the entire being, so there must also be a head in the more extended organism; and in a sound organism there can be no contention concerning which is the head and which are the members and what are the functions of both. But it must not be forgotten that it is a matter of a symbolic relationship. Both the image of Christ and the Church remind us of this relationship. Christ is our head and His divine life overflows to us, His members, if we adhere to Him in love and we are subject to Him in obedience. The head is God Incarnate who has His autonomous existence beyond His Mystical Body. The members have their individual being as free and rational creatures, and the Mystical Body springs from the love of the head and a willing subordination of its members. The functions, which proceed from each member of the Mystical Body, are assigned to the member on the basis of the gifts of each, gifts of love and of spirituality; it is the wisdom of the head to utilize the members according to their gifts; but it is the divine power of the head to provide each individual member with gifts which can be of benefit to the entire organism. And it is the purpose of this entire body, the Mystical Body of Christ, that each individual member—who is indeed a whole human being with body and soul—attain to the fullness of salvation and sonship with God, and glorify in his own way the entire body, the communion of saints.

If the man is to be the leader, (“the head”) of his wife— and we can add accordingly, likewise the head of the entire family—in the sense Christ is the head of the Church, so is it the duty of the man to conduct this microcosm of the great Mystical Body in such a way that each of its members may be able to develop his gifts perfectly and contribute to the salvation of the entire body, and that each may attain his own salvation. The husband *is not* Christ and does not have the power to bestow talents. But he does have the power to bring talents which are existent to development (or to suppress them), as a person most certainly can be helpful in developing the gifts of another. And it is wisdom on his part not to allow these gifts to atrophy but to permit them to be developed for the welfare of all. And since he himself is not perfect like Christ, but rather a creature with many gifts and many defects, his highest wisdom may be to permit the gifts of the other members to compensate for his defects, just as it could be the highest political wisdom of the sovereign to allow a judicious minister to rule. However, it is essential for the well-being of the organism that this should come about under the guidance of the head. If the body rebels against the head,

the organism will suffer as much as if the head were to allow the body to atrophy.

Although the Letter to the Ephesians treats of the marriage union, the Apostle speaks even more emphatically concerning woman's place in the community in the First Letter to Timothy. She should be dressed simply and modestly and display her piety through good works.³⁸ "The woman must learn in silence, in total humility."³⁹ But I do not permit a woman to instruct, nor to exalt herself over the man; rather she should keep quiet.⁴⁰ For Adam was created first, then Eve;⁴¹ and Adam was not seduced but the woman was seduced and thus initiated the transgression.⁴² But she will attain salvation through childbearing, provided she perseveres in faith, love, and holy reticence."⁴³

Here, even more strongly than in the Letter to the Corinthians, one has the impression that the original order and the redemptive order are subordinated by the order of fallen nature, and that the Apostle still expresses himself distinctly as a Jew in the spirit of the law. The evangelical concept of virginity appears to be forgotten completely. What is said here and what may have been feasible concerning certain improprieties in the Greek community is not to be considered as binding for the principal teaching on the relationship of the sexes. It contradicts too strongly the words and the whole custom of the Lord who had women among his closest companions, and who showed at every turn in His redemptive work that He was as concerned about the soul of woman as the soul of man. It even contradicts that passage of Paul himself which possibly expresses most purely the spirit of the gospel. "The law was our schoolmaster until Christ came to teach that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under the tutelage of the law . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor freeman; *there is neither male nor female*. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."⁴⁴

Before we go on to discuss what the word of God holds for us regarding the nature of man and woman, as far as it is accessible to our understanding, we would like to summarize what has been said so far.

The vocation of man and woman is not exactly the same in the original order, the order of fallen nature, and the redemptive order. *Originally*, man and woman were both made responsible to preserve their own likeness to God, their lordship over the earth, and the reproduction of the human race. The preeminent position of the man, which seems to be implied by the fact that he was created first, is not explained in greater depth. After their Fall, the relationship between

them is transformed from a pure partnership of love to a relationship of sovereignty and subordination and is distorted by concupiscence. The difficult struggle for existence is allocated primarily to man and the hardship of childbirth to woman. But a promise of redemption is present inasmuch as the woman is charged with the battle against evil; the male sex is to be exalted by the coming of the Son of God. The redemption will restore the original order. *The preeminence of man is disclosed by the Savior's coming to earth in the form of man.* The feminine sex is ennobled by virtue of the Savior's being born of a human mother; *a woman was the gateway through which God found entrance to humankind.* Adam as the human prototype indicates the future divine-human king of creation; just so, every man in the kingdom of God should imitate Christ, and in the marital partnership, he is to imitate the loving care of Christ for His Church. A woman should honor the image of Christ in her husband by free and loving subordination; she herself is to be the image of God's mother; but that also means that she is to be Christ's image.

II

If we try to describe the nature of man and woman as we understand it normally, we find, on the one hand, a clear explanation of what God's word tells us; on the other hand, God's word is simply a guide to life. In this we again find traces of the original order of creation, of the fall, and of redemption.

Man was called by his original God-given vocation to be master of the created world. Hence his body and soul are equipped to fight and conquer it, to *understand* it and by knowledge to make it his own, to *possess* and *enjoy* it, and, finally, to make it in a sense his own *creation* through *purposeful activity*. But, of course, man's nature is limited, as are all things created; his limitations have their origin in the primitive condition caused by original sin; as a result, the human being does not possess lordship over the earth as first intended. If the drive for knowledge is strong in him and if he uses all his strength to satisfy this drive, then, more and more, he will be forced to renounce the possession and enjoyment of the good things in life; and, in addition, his powers of creativity will be undermined. If his life's goal is possession and gratification, he will be less likely to attain pure disinterested understanding and less likely to be capable of creative activity. But if he is content completely to transform a small realm by his own creative activity (as a farmer, artist, government worker, etc.), abstract knowledge and enjoyment in the material goods of life are of less importance.

And we are constantly reminded that the more perfect the single achievement is, the more limited it is in scope. Perfection can only be achieved through a one-sidedness and the deterioration of the other qualities.

But also, given man's fallen nature, this one-sided endeavor to achieve perfection easily becomes a decadent aspiration in itself; our desire for knowledge does not respect limits placed on it but rather seeks by force to go beyond these limits; human understanding may even fail to grasp that which is not essentially hidden from it because it refuses to submit itself to the law of things; rather, it seeks to master them in arbitrary fashion or permits the clarity of its spiritual vision to be clouded by desires and lusts. In the same way, the decay of man's dominion is seen when we consider his relationship to the natural riches of the earth: instead of reverential joy in the created world, instead of a desire to preserve and develop it, man seeks to exploit it greedily to the point of destruction or to senseless acquisition without understanding how to profit from it or how to enjoy it. Related to this is the debasement of creative art through the violent distortion and caricature of natural images.

The deterioration of kingship to brutal authority also holds true in the relationship of man to woman. According to the original order, she was entrusted to him as companion and helpmate. Consequently, if she is to stand by his side in lordship over the earth, she must be endowed with the same gifts—to understand, to enjoy, and to create. But, usually, she is less endowed with these gifts and consequently runs less danger of losing herself in one-sidedness. Thus she will be able to serve man in their mutual duties; she protects man from his natural one-sidedness by her own harmonious development. But the relationship of the sexes since the Fall has become a brutal relationship of master and slave. Consequently, women's natural gifts and their best possible development are no longer considered; rather, man uses her as a means to achieve his own ends in the exercise of his work or in pacifying his own lust. However, it can easily happen that the despot becomes a slave to his lust and thereby is a slave of the slave who must satisfy him.

The degenerate relations between man and woman are transmitted in their degenerate relations with their children. Originally, the care regarding procreation was charged to them jointly. Just as they are both directed to restore their differing predispositions, in that way also, and in a most intense manner, each must compensate the other for their inherent shortcomings as parents. On the one hand, the uncultivated nature of the child necessitates care, protection, and guidance in the development of his faculties. Because of the close bodily tie

between child and mother, because of woman's specific tendency to sympathize and to serve another life, as well as her more acute sense of how to develop the child's faculties, the principal share of the child's education is assigned to woman. On the other hand, she has need for man's protection in order to carry out her duties; yet, man's more intense drive and potential for achievements make him responsible for guiding the child to fulfill his particular potentialities, to "make good." And, finally, he is responsible by his duty as sovereign of all creation to care for the noblest of all creatures. Moreover, just as man and woman are made to complement each other, so, too, the successive generations are called upon also to fulfill the same function. Each generation, therefore, is called to achieve something new and individual; education should seriously consider the need to develop new and original elements in each new generation. Thus *fatherhood* appears as an original calling of man assigned to him along with his special vocation. On the one hand, the inclination to shirk his paternal duties is a sign of decadence; on the lowest level, this reveals itself in sexual intercourse simply for the sheer satisfaction of sexual desires without any concern for offspring; on a higher level, he may assume his material obligations well but perhaps he will disregard completely his duty to share in the child's formation. On the other hand, there is danger of a brutal exercise of the prerogatives of fatherhood which limits motherhood to the merely physical care and deprives it of its higher functions and which, moreover, may authoritatively repress the unique aspirations of the new offspring.

All of the defects in a man's nature which cause him to fail in his original vocation are rooted in a perverted relationship to God. Man can fulfill his most noble vocation which is to be the image of God only if he seeks to develop his powers by subordinating himself humbly to God's guidance. To be a finite image of divine wisdom, goodness, and power would mean that man would seek *to know* within the form and the limits ordained by God, *to enjoy* gratefully the glory of God as manifested in God's creatures, *to help perfect creation* in a free human act as God intended. Man's *non serviam* before God brings about in its turn his perverted relationship to all creatures.

We have the exact parallel in woman's nature. According to the intended original order, her place is by man's side to master the earth and to care for offspring. But her body and soul are fashioned less to fight and to conquer than to cherish, guard and preserve. Of the threefold attitude towards the world—to know it, to enjoy it, to form it creatively—it is the second which concerns her most directly: she seems more capable than man of feeling a more reverent joy

in creatures; moreover, such joy requires a particular kind of perception of the good, different from rational perception in being an inherent spiritual function and a singularly feminine one. Evidently, this quality is related to woman's mission as a mother which involves an understanding of the total being and of specific values. It enables her to understand and foster organic development, the special, individual destiny of every living being. This awareness of the needs of the living being benefits not only her posterity but all creatures as well. It particularly benefits a man in making her a companion and helpmate appreciative of his aspirations. The complementary relationship of man and woman appears clearly in the original order of nature: man's primary vocation appears to be that of ruler and the paternal vocation secondary (not subordinate to his vocation as ruler but an integral part of it); woman's primary vocation is maternal: her role as ruler is secondary and included in a certain way in her maternal vocation.

A woman shares with man the powers to understand, enjoy, and act; but she also shares the same degenerate desire for the possession of things through violence, a desire which falsifies, distorts and destroys. However, the Fall affected man and woman differently; this becomes clear when examining the different meaning and orientation of the three functions (understanding, enjoyment, and creativity) in the total personality and total life of man and woman. It has already been mentioned that, because of her predisposition, woman is better protected than man from one-sidedness and from dehumanization. On the other hand, *the* one-sidedness to which she is exposed is a particularly perilous one. Abstract thought and creative action are of less concern to her than the possession and enjoyment of the good life. Therefore, the danger exists that she will commit herself only to that and that alone. And now, in addition, her reverent joy in the things of this world may degenerate into greed, leading her, on the one hand, to the anxious, avaricious scraping together and hoarding of things for which she has no use; and, on the other hand, a lapse into a mindless, idle life of sensuality.

This leads in turn to a degenerate relationship with man: already threatened by man's need for domination, her free companionship by his side will be further undermined by her in yielding to her own desires. On the other hand, her anxiety to safeguard her property may lead her also to try to dominate man. And analogies can be seen in relation to the children. The woman who leads a life based solely on self-indulgence will attempt to shirk maternal duties just as a comparably oriented man will shirk his paternal duties. Of course, she may be

prevented from this by an instinctive drive for children. The woman who hovers anxiously over her children as if they were her own possessions will try to bind them to her in every way, even by the greatest possible elimination of the father's rights. She will try to curtail their freedom of development; she will check their development and destroy their happiness instead of serving man, children, and all creatures in a reverential loving manner in order to foster their natural formation for the glory of God and thereby further their natural happiness.

The root of the evil lies again in her perverted relationship to God. Because woman rebelled against God at the time of the Fall and simultaneously assumed a superiority over man by seducing him, her punishment is subjugation to man's dominion. Because the sin which she encouraged him to commit was in all likelihood a sin of sensuality, woman is more intensely exposed to the danger of descent into stark carnality. And when this happens, she always becomes once again the evil seductress, whereas, paradoxically, God has specifically enjoined her to combat evil.

III

We have indicated how the nature and original vocation of man and woman may be sought after and restored; only as God's children can this be attained. If we in addition do our share, our readoption as children of God is guaranteed by Christ's redemptive act. The Israelites of the Old Covenant did their part for redemption as they awaited the Messiah in true adherence to the Law. For women, this meant humble submission to man's sovereignty, a scrupulous vigilance to maintain their purity, a discipline of the senses more austere than that performed by men, a craving for posterity in whom they might envision their own salvation, and an authentic effort to raise their children in the fear of God. For each man this meant fidelity to the prescribed prayers and sacrificial worship, obedience to moral and social precepts, responsibility as head of the family for wife and children, esteem for woman as the mother of his children.

In the New Covenant, the human being fulfills his share of the work of redemption through the closest personal union with Christ: through *faith* which clings to Him as the way of salvation, as the truth which He reveals, and as the way to beatitude which He offers; through *hope* which awaits with absolute trust the life promised by Him; through *love* which looks for every possible way to approach Him. The human being seeks always to know Him more intimately

through *contemplation* of His life and meditation on His word; he strives for the closest union with Him in the *Holy Eucharist*; he shares in His mystical, resurrected life through participation in the Church year and in its *liturgy*. Salvation admits of no differences between the sexes; rather, the salvation of each one and their relationship to one another both depend on the same close personal union with Christ.

The redemptive act did not restore corrupted nature with one stroke. Christ sowed the seed of salvation in humanity in order that it might grow not only in the inner and outer life of the Church, but that it might grow especially in each individual soul. We who are “on our way” in our pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem experience in ourselves the conflict between corrupt nature and grace which, like a growing plant, can grow and bloom, triumphing over all pestilence. Everywhere about us, we see in the interaction of the sexes the direct fruits of original sin in most terrifying forms: an unleashed sexual life in which every trace of their high calling seems to be lost; a struggle between the sexes, one pitted against the other, as they fight for their rights and, in doing so, no longer appear to hear the voices of nature and of God. But we can see also how it can be different whenever the power of grace is operative.

In Christian marriage, the husband as head of the family community is concerned with its health: not only does he strive according to his powers to procure its livelihood and worldly “success,” but also he must contribute his share to its spiritual well-being.

This means that sometimes he will guide and lend a helping hand, at other times find it necessary to yield cautiously, and even occasionally to take preventative or opposing action. He will aid in the development of the talents and energies of his wife and children whenever he can and whenever need be. If he has to deal with weaker natures and limited abilities, if he observes a lack of courage and self-confidence, he will try to draw out the hidden talents. One of his duties is to strengthen the spirituality of his wife, not permitting her to lapse into a life of mere sensuality; this could be done by letting her participate in his own creative work or in independent activity of her own. Should she be deprived of both alternatives, should he try to confine her to a sphere too narrow for her talents, or should he relinquish her entirely to the merely sensual life, he would carry a great share of responsibility for the resulting consequences: responsibility for the atrophy of her higher life, for pathological disturbance, for an excessive dependence on husband and children, one which becomes a burden to them, and for the desolation of her life if one day she is left behind on her own. The

analogy also holds true in relation to the children. On the other hand, it pertains to his duties as head of the family to make sure of the order and harmony of family life, to see to it that every member is made not only to care for his own individual development but also to consider the others and to practice the self-denial required in the performance of his household duties. And, finally, through concern for the well-ordered natural life of each individual and of the entire house, he must not neglect the family's spiritual life. In his small community, the husband should imitate Christ as head of the Church; he should consider his greatest mission to lead the entire family in the imitation of Christ and, according to his powers, to further all seeds of grace which are stirring in them. The more intimate his own union with the Lord, so much the more will he succeed.

The family burden which the husband bears in addition to his professional duties would seem all too heavy if his helpmate did not stand by his side; she is called in accordance with her nature to carry more than half of this load. She craves for an unhampered development of her personality just as much as she does to help another toward that same goal. And thus the husband will find that she can give him invaluable advice in guiding the lives of the children as well as of themselves; indeed, often he would fulfill his duties as leader best if he would yield to her and permit himself to be led by her. Part of her natural feminine concern for the right development of the beings surrounding her involves the creation of an ambience, of order and beauty conducive to their development.

A quality unique to woman is her singular sensitivity to moral values and an abhorrence for all which is low and mean; this quality protects her against the dangers of education and of total surrender to sensuality. This is expressed by the mysterious prophecy, become legendary, that woman would be engaged in battle against the serpent; and this prophecy is fulfilled by the victory over evil won for all humanity through Mary, queen of all women. Allied closely to this sensitivity for moral values is her yearning for the divine and for her own personal union with the Lord, her readiness and desire to be completely fulfilled and guided by His love. That is why, in a rightly-ordered family life, the mission of moral and religious education is given chiefly to the wife. If her life is anchored completely in Jesus, then, also, she is best protected against the dangerous loss of moderation. This could happen by her being overly wrapped up in those about her; or, on the contrary, it could happen by her being wrapped up only in herself and would cut the ground from under her feet, the ground on which she must stand if she is to be able to support and to help others. Her professional activity

counterbalances the risk of submerging herself all too intimately in another's life and thereby sacrificing her own; however, an exclusive preoccupation with her professional activity would bring the opposite danger of infidelity toward her feminine vocation. Only those who surrender themselves completely into the Lord's hands can trust that they will avoid disaster between Scylla and Charybdis. Whatever is surrendered to Him is not lost but is saved, chastened, exalted and proportioned out in true measure.

We are led by these last comments to the question of the vocation practised outside of the home and of the relationship between man and woman in professional life. Obviously now, because of the development of the last decades and of recent years, we must consider as closed the historical epoch which made an absolute differentiation between the duties of the sexes, i.e., that woman should assume the domestic duties and man the struggle for a livelihood. Today, it is not at all too difficult for us to understand how this evolution took place. The victories of natural science and technology which progressively replaced human labor by mechanical means brought to women a great liberation and a desire to use their nascent powers in another way. In the transitional period, much unused power was senselessly squandered in empty dawdling; and, because of this, valuable human energy was wasted away. The necessary changes were brought about only after a series of difficult crises. These crises were partly caused through excessive passion, both on the part of the pioneers of the feminist movement and of their opponents, although they both often fought with humane arguments. In part, these crises were caused by the passive opposition of the inert multitude which tends to cling without objective scrutiny to the accustomed ways of the past. At last, post-war conditions in Germany brought revolutionary changes even in this domain; and the accompanying economic depression compelled even those who until then had had no thoughts of professional training to work for a living. Hence, the condition in which we find ourselves today is an abnormal one, and it does not constitute a suitable basis for fundamental analysis.

Above all, with regard to the previous explanation, we must ask: On the whole does woman's professional life outside of the home violate the order of nature and grace? I believe that one must answer "no" to this question. It seems to me that a common creativity in all areas was assigned in the original order, even if this was with a differing allocation of roles. The change in the original order which took place after the Fall does not signify its complete termination; thus nature also was not fully corrupted but preserved the same powers, only

now weakened and exposed to error. The fact that *all* powers which the husband possesses are present in a feminine nature as well—even though they may generally appear in different degrees and relationships—is an indication they should be employed in corresponding activity. And wherever the circle of domestic duties is too narrow for the wife to attain the full formation of her powers, both nature and reason concur that she reach out beyond this circle. It appears to me, however, that there is a limit to such professional activities whenever it jeopardizes domestic life, i.e., the community of life and formation consisting of parents and children. It even seems to me a contradiction of the divine order when the professional activities of the husband escalate to a degree which cuts him off completely from family life. This is even more true of the wife. Any social condition is an unhealthy one which compels married women to seek gainful employment and makes it impossible for them to manage their home. And we should accept as normal that the married woman is restricted to domestic life at a time when her household duties exact her total energies.

After the Fall, woman was forced to care for the most primitive necessities of life, which resulted in a severe curtailment of her powers; in this respect, she has benefited from conditions brought about by cultural change. Moreover, the change in her destiny implied her subordination to man: the extent and type of her activity were made dependent on his will; and, because his judgment and will are not infallible, she is not guaranteed that his control over her will be regulated by right reason. Moreover, inasmuch as the harmony between the sexes was disordered by the Fall, the question of the subordination of woman involved a bitter conflict concerning the activities suitable to corrupted masculine as well as feminine nature.

The redemptive order restores the original relationship; the more redemption is personally adopted, the more it makes possible a harmonious collaboration and an agreement concerning the allotment of vocational roles. It caused a further basic change in the status of woman by asserting the ideal of virginity. This broke through the Old Testament norm which stipulates that woman effects her salvation only by bearing children. And in those particular cases where individual women like Deborah and Judith had been called divinely to extraordinary achievements for God's people, even the norm of the Old Covenant had been changed as well. Now a new way reveals that women can consecrate themselves exclusively to the service of God, and they can develop a manifold activity in His service. Even the same St. Paul whose writings so often strongly echo Old Testament views has pronounced clearly that, from his point

of view, it is good for men as well as for women to marry but it may be better not to marry. And now and then, he emphasizes the praiseworthy achievement of women in the service of the first pastoral communities.⁴⁵

Before considering men and women's common vocation in God's service, we would like to consider the problem of the distribution of vocations according to the natural order. Should certain positions be reserved for only men, others for only women, and perhaps a few open for both? I believe that this question also must be answered negatively. The strong individual differences existing within both sexes must be taken into account. Many women have masculine characteristics just as many men share feminine ones. Consequently, every so-called "masculine" occupation may be exercised by many women as well as many "feminine" occupations by certain men.

It seems right, therefore, that no legal barriers of any kind should exist. Rather, one can hope that a natural choice of vocation may be made thanks to an upbringing, education, and guidance in harmony with the individual's nature; unsuitable elements should be eliminated by strict objective requirements. The differences between masculine and feminine natures indicate clearly that a specific aptitude for certain professions is present in each. Thus, the choice of a profession will usually resolve itself.

Masculine vocations usually require bodily strength, the ability for predominantly abstract thought, and independent creativity: as an example, we might cite the hard physical labor required in industry, trade, and agriculture; or, to cite another example, the abstract thought required in technological fields such as mathematics and theoretical physics; and, finally, this can be seen even in the precision needed in clerical and administrative work of a mechanical nature and in certain branches of art. True feminine qualities are required wherever feeling, intuition, empathy, and adaptability come into play. Above all, this activity involves the *total person* in caring for, cultivating, helping, understanding, and in encouraging the gifts of the other. And since woman is mainly concerned with serving people and making provisions for them, she is able to function well in all educational and medical professions, in all social work, in the human sciences, in the arts which depict humanity, as well as in the business world and in public and parochial administration.

In times of extreme economic distress such as ours, it would not be feasible or possible to make distinctions between masculine and feminine professions; everyone must take any employment as soon as it is offered, whether or not it suits his or her specific individual talents. Today, almost on an average, people

are in “vocations” to which they are not called by nature; one can almost consider it a stroke of luck when it is otherwise. Then there is nothing left but to make the most of the situation: the pertinent professional requirements must be satisfied but not at the cost of denying one’s own nature by permitting it to atrophy; rather, it should contribute to the good of one’s associates. (This may mean, for example, that the woman employed even in mechanical work will prove to be sympathetic and charitable to her colleagues; and the man caught in an unsuitable job nevertheless will exhibit inventive qualities in organizing his work.) Of course, this demands a high degree of personal maturity and an unconditional good will in doing one’s best in any given situation. Such a perspective can hardly be attained without understanding that the circumstances of life are God-given, that one’s work is service to God, and that the gifts which God gives must be developed to His glory in this work. This is valid not only for those vocations consecrated to God but for every vocation; and yet, of course, the vocation which is designated as being consecrated to God does stand out as being especially meaningful.

In common usage we say that priests and religious must be especially *called*, which means that a particular call must be sent to them by God. Is there any difference between the call sent to man and that to woman? Women just as men have been called to the religious state at all times. And when we consider the manifold ramifications of contemporary religious life, when we acknowledge that the extremely diverse works of charity in our times are practised also by the feminine Orders and congregations, we can see only one essential difference which still exists in reality: the actual priestly work is reserved for men. This introduces us now to the difficult and much debated question of *priesthood for women*.

If we consider the attitude of the Lord Himself, we understand that He accepted the free loving services of women for Himself and His Apostles and that women were among His disciples and most intimate confidants. Yet He did not grant them the priesthood, not even to His mother, Queen of Apostles, who was exalted above all humanity in human perfection and fullness of grace.

In the early Church, women played an active part in the various congregational charities, and their intense apostolate as confessors and martyrs had a profound effect. Virginal purity was celebrated in liturgy, and for women there was also a consecrated ecclesiastical office—the diaconate with its special ordination⁴⁶—but the Church did not go so far as to admit them to the priesthood as well. And in later historical developments, women were displaced from these

posts; also, it seems that under the influence of the Hebraic and Roman judicial concepts, there was a gradual decline in their canonical status. We are witnessing a decided change here in recent times: feminine energies are now strongly demanded as help in church charities and pastoral work. In recent militant movements, the women are demanding that their activities be recognized once more as an ordained church ministry, and it may well be that one day attention will be given to their demands. Whether this will be the first step then, finally, on the path leading to women in the priesthood is the question.

It seems to me that such an implementation by the Church, until now unheard of, cannot be forbidden by *dogma*. However, the practicality of such a recommendation brings into play various arguments both pro and con. The whole tradition speaks *against* it from the beginning. But in my opinion, even more significant is the mysterious fact emphasized earlier—that Christ came to earth as the *Son of Man*. The first creature on earth fashioned in an unrivaled sense as God's image was therefore a man; that seems to indicate to me that He wished to institute only men as His official representatives on earth. Yet, He bound Himself so intimately to *one* woman as to no other on earth: He formed her so closely after His own image as no other human being before or after; He gave her a place in the Church for all eternity such as has been given to no other human being. And just so, He has called women in all times to the most intimate union with Him: they are to be emissaries of His love, proclaimers of His will to kings and popes, and forerunners of His Kingdom in the hearts of men. To be the *Spouse of Christ* is the most sublime vocation which has been given, and whoever sees this way open before her will yearn for no other way.

It is the vocation of every Christian, not only of a few elect, to belong to God in love's free surrender and to serve Him. Whether man or woman, whether consecrated or not, each one is called to the imitation of Christ. The further the individual continues on this path, the more Christlike he will become. Christ embodies the ideal of human perfection: in Him all bias and defects are removed, and the masculine and feminine virtues are united and their weaknesses redeemed; therefore, His true followers will be progressively exalted over their natural limitations. That is why we see in holy men a womanly tenderness and a truly maternal solicitude for the souls entrusted to them while in holy women there is manly boldness, proficiency, and determination.

We are thus led through the imitation of Christ to the development of our original human vocation which is to present God's image in ourselves: the *Lord of creation*, as one protects, preserves and advances all creatures in one's own

circle; the *Father*, as one begets and educates children for the kingdom of God through *spiritual* paternity and maternity. Transcendence over natural limitations is the highest effect of grace; however, this can never be attained by an arbitrary battle against nature and by denial of natural limitations but only through humble submission to the God-given order.