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*Men, Mary,
and Manliness*

ED WILLOCK

A
MARIAN
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Dayton, Ohio

ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . .

Since 1946 when he founded *Integrity* magazine with Carol Jackson, Ed Willock has been a familiar name as a contributor to numerous Catholic periodicals, including *Torch*, *Commonweal*, *Catholic Art Quarterly*, *Today*, *Books on Trial*, *Marianist*, and *Catholic School Editor*. One of his better known pieces is "Marriage for Keeps," a thirty-six page autobiographical essay in the October 1950 issue of *Integrity*.

Mr. Willock is about as famous for his penetrating cartoons and jingles as he is for his writing, and he often combines his talents in illustrating his own work. Sheed and Ward published a collection of such work in *Ye Gods* (1948), an analysis in word and picture of the materialistic gods of our day.

Born in Boston in 1916, Willock left school after completing the twelfth grade and worked as a shipping clerk while he studied art on the side and became well acquainted with Catholic social thought through wide reading. In October 1946, he and Miss Jackson published the first issue of *Integrity*, "dedicated to the task of discovering the new synthesis of Religion and Life for our times." He served as co-editor of the magazine until September 1951, when serious illness forced him to relinquish his editorial activities.

Ed Willock lives with his wife and twelve children in Orangeburg, New York, where he and a group of family men have worked for some years building their own houses in community on weekends and vacations.

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MEN, MARY, AND MANLINESS

Ed Willock

My left eye and my right eye do different jobs, but the jobs are to the same end, and they work together. If my eyes refuse to work together, a state of ocular anarchy ensues, and I become "walleyed." If one insists upon usurping the prerogatives of the other, I become "cockeyed." The normal state of ocular health then can be described as a mutual tension which sets them apart, and an opposing tension that draws them together. These tensions of attraction and repulsion produce a certain equilibrium, a certain appropriate harmony of operation.

A COMPARABLE CONDITION OF ATTRACTION AND REPULSION EXISTS

between the human sexes. It is normal for a man to love a woman: this is the attraction. A man does not want to become a woman: this is the repulsion. It is the same with the woman. The condition that is to be desired is an equilibrium of opposing forces. When we find this satisfactory and happy condition in a woman, we say she is womanly. When we find it in a man, we say he is manly. Manliness, then, is the masculine virtue that makes the man best adapted to achieving a common goal with the collaboration of women. As Christians we recognize that goal as the saving of our several souls, and the making of temporal institutions which will further that end.

It is impossible to measure a straight line with a crooked yardstick. Ever since Eve went shopping through Eden in search of a new delicacy and accepted the table d'hote proffered by Satan, she, Adam, and their innumerable children have been prone to invent their own standards of conduct. The closets of history are packed with crooked yardsticks, abandoned by the generation which followed after those who said the crooked could measure the straight. Each generation has its own fanciful measure of manliness and womanliness. Both Caesar's wife and Napoleon's mistress have enjoyed short reigns as symbols of womanliness. In America we can see subtle contrasts between such ideals as the pioneer mother and Mrs. America of 1948. Trekking across the prairies of the West seemed to demand different virtues from those required to tread the boardwalk at Atlantic City. The costumes as well as the customs of the two periods have few points in common.

IF, THEN, CAESAR, NAPOLEON, THE PIONEER HUSBAND, AND MRS.

America of 1948 achieved a fairly workable relationship with their various mates, it would seem that we are provided with diverse and contradictory examples of manliness. If manliness is to be measured in reference to women, we must have some symbol of womanliness that

is both imminent in the affairs of history, and yet transcends the changing pattern of human perversity. Such a woman must be a living human being adapting herself to the good that lives in every page of history. She must at the same time reign transcendent, immutable in her radiant perfection.

We have such a woman and her name is Mary. She is a virgin, and yet a mother. She is an active housewife and yet a contemplative. She walks upon the stars, and yet it is her delight to be with the children of men. She was seen in the dusk of the setting Testament by Simeon the prophet. She was seen yesterday at high noon by three children of Portugal. With a certainty for which most men will die and after which few reporters will seek, we know that she is with us, in all our affairs, Mary the mother of Christ, and our mother.

It is a healthy sign for the increase of manliness that a true devotion to Mary is being so widely propagated today. The Mary to whom I was introduced in parochial school and to whom I prayed in childhood, and who, I am sure, is the concept held by most Catholics today, though an admirable Mary, is a person somewhat less grand, and somewhat more fuzzy than the Mary of the Gospels. As I conceived of her then, she was a sort of mid-Victorian maiden-lady of means. It would have been difficult to see her in the role of a busy, work-stained mother of the kitchen. The role best suited to her would have been that of an angelically benevolent social worker, who would sit serenely in the parlor, sympathetic, compassionate, but never quite **immersed** in **our** mundane problems. It is difficult for men with such a view of Mary to see the relevance of her life to mature manliness.

TODAY THERE IS AMPLE LITERATURE INSPIRED ON THE MOST PART by the fruitful apostolate of Saint Louis de Montfort to provide any man who desires it with a mature understanding of the doctrine of Mary, as well as occasion for becoming, in truth, her son in Christ. Manliness, then, can best be determined in reference to a true understanding and a true devotion to Mary.

The story of the marriage feast of Cana is providing a good deal of inspiration to apostolic marriage groups today. Many are the lessons to be drawn from it. There is one lesson, however, that is especially relevant here. Cana stands at mid-noon between the dawn at Bethlehem and the dusk at Calvary. It is a turning point in the Epic of the Incarnation. At a time when Christ is shown to us in His most human aspect, as a guest at a gay marriage feast, He gives a breathtaking evidence of His divinity. Much as a kindly neighbor might help out a distracted host by repairing a bothersome electric toaster, Christ helped the party to come off, and

at the same time proved His divinity to His followers by changing water into wine. The magnificent gesture suffered not at all, but was rather enhanced, by the circumstances under which it was performed. It was the act of a God Who was, at the same time, a friendly neighbor.

THE CONVERSATION THAT WENT ON BETWEEN MARY AND JESUS

at that time is most revealing. Mary noticed the embarrassment of the host and said simply, "They have no wine." Christ answered just as simply, "Woman, what is that to thee and to Me? My hour is not yet come." Our Lord's words, we are advised, suffer in translation. "Woman," as a title in those days, was both courteous and proper. The rest of the statement could be translated as, "Never mind," or, "Don't bother about it." The time was not yet ripe for Him to demonstrate His divine powers. Apparently Mary read more in His looks than we can determine from the words. She undoubtedly expected Him to comply when she said to the waiters, "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." We are all familiar with the consequent miracle.

The rather nice thing about this episode is the demonstration of the complementary nature of manliness and womanliness. As a lesson for us it casts Christ and Mary in the role of man and woman, seemingly endowed each with peculiar weaknesses which we know in reality they do not possess. In this little drama, Christ appears to have that social obtuseness common to the male. It tickles a man to think that Christ **might not** have noticed the discomfort of the host. How like a man! Husbands can recall so frequently a wifely kick in the shins to remind them that an air of gloom has descended on the gathering. Mrs. Brophy who dislikes cigars is sitting next to Uncle Al and his inevitable stogie! Mrs. Bagby who lives at the other side of town is trying to catch her husband's eye to remind him that the last bus leaves in ten minutes.

ON THE OTHER HAND, MARY, IN THE STORY OF CANA, SEEMS TO

have forgotten the cosmic significance of her Son's mission. Should He Who is about to embark upon the salvation of mankind be bothered by the trifling matter of a faux pas? How like a woman! Mr. Jones is in the midst of setting the center span of the George Washington Bridge in place and he gets a phone call from his wife reminding him not to forget to bring home some paper napkins for little Marjorie's birthday party. Mr. Pazinski is working on the last movement of his first symphony and his wife come in and asks him to remind the milkman not to leave three quarts of milk today because Wilfred is going to stay overnight at Aunt Agatha's.

At this point in the story we see a complication which daily has plagued the affairs of mankind since the dawn of time. We see a certain tension

existing between the man's concern about missions and the woman's concern about persons. Let us see how: Mary and Jesus resolved this complication before we go into its significance for us.

IT WOULD SEEM THAT CHRIST REVERSED HIS DECISION FROM ONE of refusal to one of compliance. This, I believe, was done for our benefit. First it gave us striking evidence of the intercessional powers of Mary Mediatrix. Christ, the omnipotent and the omniscient, is moved by a word from Mary. The second lesson is one that is related to my thesis here. Christ must have seen a relevance between this minor catastrophe of failing wine, and His major Epic of Salvation, or else He would not have performed the miracle, nor would Mary have asked Him to do so. For our edification, He countered His question, "What does it matter?" with the answer, "It **does** matter!" The simple, homely trifles of daily life, kindly concerns, the niceties of neighborliness, in other words, the flesh of life, **are** part and parcel with the Epic of the Cross and the Sword. The mission of Christ, **the mission** within which all our missions find their validity, embraces all things fondly; as Chesterson expresses it: "But one thing is necessary —everything."

It is a matter of universal observation as well as a lesson from Cana that men are by the nature of masculinity fondly concerned with **things**. Not only are they concerned as craftsmen with steel, and wood, and cement, and pipes, but as philosophers and organizers with the less tangible things of causes, techniques, and theories. Women, on the other hand, are most fondly concerned with persons, and when they are concerned with things, it is only as they are relevant to persons. The fact that these interests overlap does not take away from the fact that the male and female perspectives are different, but only proves that the differences are meant to be complementary. Just as the two views of an object seen by either eye unite in the mind to provide a full-rounded, three-dimensional figure, so also do the male and female perspectives combine to supply mankind with a full-rounded view of reality from which to make his judgments. Just as the left eye may perceive from its corner a danger the right eye might overlook, so too does the female soul respond to a portent that the male may fail to see. Man's is the perspective of things. Woman's is the perspective of persons. The composite of these two views is as close to a full perception of reality as man can achieve.

WHEN A MAN PERMITS HIS INTEREST IN THINGS TO MAKE HIM ignore his responsibilities to persons, he is unmanly. Whenever this is the case it is the woman who suffers, because he is in fact violating the things she holds sacred, or else interfering with her operation within that area. If, for example, the Don Juan were to consider for a time that

the women he uses as playthings are indeed **persons** and if he were aware of how personally the ladies, no matter how loose, were wounded by his momentary passion, the obligation of male celibacy and marital fidelity would seem to him much more encumbent upon human nature. God has endowed the man with a certain objectivity so that he can reason without passion and thus move swiftly and surely to truth and justice. It is this same objectivity that can turn to abuse when the man insists upon eliminating the **personal factor**, treating everything personal as an intrusion upon his work, or reducing persons to integers in his own pet equation.

Some Catholic historians have conceded to the adverse critics of the Middle Ages that the people of those times were more brutal than the modern man. I think that is conceding too much. I think it is less brutal to sever the head of an enemy with a cross-sword than to fire an innocent employee by means of an interoffice memo. At least in the Middle Ages great caution was taken to safeguard the non-combatant women and children. Ours is the brutality of Hiroshima, where a comparatively well-dressed man, deliberately, and with little need for courage, pressed a button which brought screaming death about the ears of grandmothers and babes in arms. Manliness it not in the stomach but in the mind. The modern stomach may revolt against the stake and sword of the Middle Ages, but our minds can adapt themselves quite nicely to remote injustices for which we are responsible. Yes, perhaps our stomachs are more delicate. That is why we must drive our cars quickly through the areas of the city that bear the marks of our commercial brutality so that we may pacify our stomachs with the civilized gentility of the suburbs.

THE BRUTALITY BY REMOTE CONTROL THAT CHARACTERIZES THE present generation is the fruit of a tradition which was masculinely dominated. Women have always been the trustees of human life and the stewards of human dignity. When Mary was revered by men in their works and politics, they conducted their affairs with due respect for the woman, the family, and for human life. If in the days of Mary, women were confined to the home, they were confined not as prisoners, but as queens. Yesterday's theory has been supported by today's fact, that a woman stands beside a man more proudly as a wife than as a secretary. History testifies to the fact that homes were sacred when the leaders of nations stood in cruel armor beneath the banners of the Virgin, and, now when the leaders stand neatly in business suits beneath emblems of their own devising, the cities of the world whether bombed or bomb-free have heaped their families in sorry piles. Only yesterday I saw the forlorn sight of a mother and child huddled in an airless and sunless New York room, watching across the street a long stretch of river bank being clear so that

men in business suits in the U.N. could comfortably discuss the lack of housing in the world.

In the areas where ideas are manufactured we see the same perverse masculinity and unmanliness. The saints and scholars to whom we are indebted for our traditional Catholic thought always did their work in the company of Mary. Neither God nor man ever became for them a mere theory or fact. The entire universe was a personal message from God to man. Thus their logic and objectivity, though pure and dispassionate, were always related to their love of the divine Persons. When Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, was expelled from the schools and in her place was erected the idol of Pure Reason, the much boasted rationality of the thinkers soon became irrationality. They might have been saved from this madness if they had not divorced their academic work from the realm of personal life. Had they only regarded persons instead of theories for a while they would have seen the suicides, neuroses, irresponsibilities, infidelities, and homosexualities of the poor souls who applied their warped ideas to human behavior. Had they interspersed their ratiocinations with the quiet contemplation of a Marian Magnificat, the Holy Ghost would have readjusted the focus of their inquiry. They would have learned from Mary that Truth and Love are one and He is Christ. Where there is not charity there cannot be truth.

MARY DOES NOT ACCOMPANY THE MODERN MAN IN HIS STUDIES

nor in his work. In the realm of ideas he scorns her humility, her contemplative wisdom. In business he rejects as sentimentalism her tears for the weak and the oppressed. In politics he does not live with justice as she did, nor does he clothe the common good she did. That is why homes and babies, and all of the other delicate matters of human dignity which are dear to the hearts of women, are looked upon as bothersome intrusions in the machinery of progress. So obtuse is the modern male in his unmanliness that he honestly believes that this technical heaven he has built is a blessing to womankind. He cannot see that the glamor and gadgets are second-rate substitutes for dignified womanhood and babies.

At home the process is reversed. Without Mary, the natural hierarchy of Nazareth has toppled. Mama and Junior battle it out to see which one is going to run daddy. It is not uncommon to hear of a shrewd enterpriser, who scorns the supine whimpers of his employees begging for more wages, lavishing his wealth upon an idolent son and a demanding wife, slave to their every whim and fancy. He is a ruthless tyrant at his desk, and a maudlin old lady in his home. The pattern of dual control is repeated all the way down through the income layers of the social cake. The taxi driver who rides the roads like Attila the Hun, washes the dishes at home

so that his teen-age daughters won't mar their paint job. Men who cannot tolerate weakness in their co-workers are quite satisfied to leave it up to mama to raise a race of juvenile softies.

THE UNMANLINESS OF ECONOMIC, PHILOSOPHIC, AND POLITICAL brutality has its counterpart in the home where manliness abdicates so that feminine sentimentality and neurosis can rule the roost. Because she is without a head, the little woman is turning to fashions and bridge, coffee and cigarettes, trying to find the solace and dignity that can only be hers as mate to a man who has a dignified mission which he hopes to impart to her children. Instead of providing her with an ideal and with children, he feeds her hunger with orchids and furs. He could never be so cruel as to burden her with the cross of salvation.

From Mary these men could learn that charity is austere. Although she suffered in every fiber the indignities and brutality directed against her Son, Mary never for a moment discouraged Him in His awful mission, but rather reared Him in austere preparation. From men are expected the directives of justice and austerity, and though they must be careful not to ride roughshod over the sensibilities of womankind, they cannot capitulate to women without losing their manliness.

MANLINESS IS IMPORTANT IN THE LAY APOSTOLATE. OUR MISSION as men will be worked out in close collaboration with the women. The family apostolate has learned from experience that the husband and wife must work more closely together than has been the traditional custom. At first the men may feel that having the women around is a handicap. I used to think so myself, but I have learned that whether it be a family movement or a project consisting of single people, the contribution of the women is exactly what is needed to complement the efforts of the men. The women bring into public life and private discussion the qualities of Mary, and it is these qualities which are most needed, and beside which a new manliness can grow.

- To cite a few examples: The idea of personal sanctification cannot be divorced from any apostolate. We can't give what we haven't got. Men may be firmly convinced of the need for sanctity, but it is the woman who will add to this conviction a devout conversion of the will. Men are attracted by the **idea** of sanctity, but the women, practical creatures that they are, transmit the ideas from the head to the knees. Sanctity, while there are women around, means prayers, fasts, and good works.

- When women are present men are less liable to indulge in endless debate. Women introduce that little bit of whimsical anarchy which is an

antidote for pompous logic. Their concern is for persons not syllogisms.

- Women will temper the self-sufficiency of men with their innate and constant dependence upon God. True, men want God as a partner, but they tend to reduce Him to the level of a co-partner or a junior partner. Because the women have learned gracefully to take a back seat all through the ages, they are less liable to forget Who is driving the universe. When the women take part, God's primacy and His Providence will be a prominent consideration in every judgment.

- Finally, when it comes to action, women will see to the welfare of the innocent. They will be concerned for the toes that might be stepped on. Because they are more sensitive to the feelings of persons, they can teach men many lessons in human kindness and the power of persuasion.

MANLINESS, THEN, WILL GROW IN REFERENCE TO MARY. DEVOTION to her will make for an effective collaboration with women. It will save us from the two extremes of brutality and effeminacy. Of course, the problem is not resolved because it is set down on paper. The equilibrium between the sexes is a much more difficult one to achieve or maintain than the equilibrium between the eyes. The thing involved here is the most ornery of God's creatures, the human will. I am tempted to add a line to the famous quotation of Pope Pius XI: "All men have the imperative duty to remember that they have a mission to fulfill, that of doing the impossible — **collaborating with women.**" With Christ and Mary, however, "all things are possible."



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