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Auguste Comte
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The Catechism of Positive Religion

This English edition of *The Catechism of Positive Religion* was published in 1891, thirty-four years after the death of Comte, the French philosopher of science and politics and founder of positivism, whose work was widely read in the later nineteenth century. Comte's self-published French original of 1852, translated here, outlines his progressive ideal of 'sociocracy', which would provide a systematic basis, free of metaphysics, for intellectual and moral transactions among humans. Congreve's edition, in common with other, divides the book into five parts. The introduction contains two dialogues, entitled *General Theory of Religion* and *Theory of Humanity*. Parts 1-3 respectively consider the Positivist's private and public 'worship'; 'doctrine', including the external world and human society and ethics; and 'regime' or way of life, private and public. The final two dialogues cover polytheism, monotheism and theocracy. This book remains of interest as an early precursor of secular humanist ethics.

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The Catechism of Positive Religion

*Or Summary Exposition of the Universal
Religion in Thirteen Systematic Conversations
Between a Woman and a Priest of Humanity*

AUGUSTE COMTE



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THE
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THE CATECHISM
OF
POSITIVE RELIGION

*TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF
AUGUSTE COMTE*

BY
RICHARD CONGREVE

*Third Edition
REVISED AND CORRECTED*

LONDON
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1891

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REPUBLIC OF THE WEST
ORDER AND PROGRESS—LIVE FOR OTHERS

THE
CATECHISM OF POSITIVISM
OR
SUMMARY EXPOSITION
OF
THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION

*IN THIRTEEN SYSTEMATIC CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN A
WOMAN AND A PRIEST OF HUMANITY;*

BY AUGUSTE COMTE
AUTHOR OF "THE SYSTEM OF POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY," AND OF
"THE SYSTEM OF POSITIVE POLITICS"

LOVE FOR PRINCIPLE
AND ORDER FOR BASIS;
PROGRESS FOR END.

PREFATORY NOTE TO THIRD EDITION.



IN the preface to the fourth volume of his *System of Positive Politics* (Treatise of Sociology instituting the Religion of Humanity), Auguste Comte says :—

“Taking the volume as a whole, the general constitution of the religion has become at once more systematic, more moral, and more practical, by definitively placing the worship before the doctrine. I regret that this correction is subsequent to the composition of the *Positivist Catechism*, the purpose of which it would have aided. Without waiting, however, for a second edition of that short work, the improvement may be effected by dividing into two the long conversation on the doctrine as a whole. The first half, bearing directly on the theory of the Great Being (Humanity), should for the future form a separate chapter and follow on the Introduction. Then we may pass at once to the study of the worship and after it to that of the doctrine, the general conversation on which will thus be limited to its second half, the half which alone relates to the encyclopedic constitution.

“This division of a long chapter allows the adoption of the definitive arrangement, the transposition being easy,

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and involving no change in the exposition as it stands. I take the opportunity to urge the readers of my Catechism also to divide the last chapter, studying first the Fetichist and Theocratic part common to all nations, then the three-fold transition peculiar to the West. By these two changes, the small work which is the organ of propagation should for the future be considered as consisting of thirteen chapters instead of eleven."

In obedience to this formal injunction, the change recommended was introduced into the English translation in 1858. It has been adopted by the later French editions of the work, by the Italian and Portuguese translations, and will doubtless be adopted by any other translations.

The only change I have made in this new issue, rendered necessary by the accidental destruction by fire at the printers of the unsold copies of the second edition, is the suppression of the Appendix; I think it better that all such additional matter should appear in a separate form as a supplement to the Catechism. I have added from the Positivist Tables the sketch of the treatises on theoretical and practical morals, and I have added also an index of the proper names—any other index should be the work of each diligent student for himself. The text has been revised throughout.

RICHARD CONGREVE.

55 PALACE GARDENS TERRACE,
LONDON, W.
24 GUTENBERG 103 (5th September 1891).

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P R E F A C E.



“IN the name of the Past and of the Future, the servants of Humanity—theoricians and practicians—come forward to claim as their due the general direction of this world, in order to construct at length the true Providence, moral, intellectual, and material; excluding once for all from political supremacy all the different servants of God—Catholic, Protestant, or Deist—as at once belated and a source of trouble.” With this uncompromising announcement, on Sunday, 19th October 1851, in the Palais Cardinal, after a summary of five hours, I ended my third *Course of Philosophical Lectures on the General History of Humanity*. Since that memorable conclusion, the publication of the second volume of my *System of Positive Politics* has lately manifested directly how appropriate is such a social destination to the philosophy which is able to suggest the most systematic theory of the human order.

We come forward then, avowedly, to deliver the West from an anarchical democracy and from a retrograde aristocracy, so to constitute, as far as practicable, a true Sociocracy, one combining wisely, in furtherance of the common regeneration, all the powers of man, each in every case brought to bear according to its nature. In fact, we Sociocrats are no more democrats than aristocrats. In our eyes the respectable mass of these two opposite parties represents, though on no system, on

A

the one hand solidarity, and on the other continuity, between which Positivism establishes on a deep foundation a necessary subordination, the substitute at last for their deplorable antagonism. But whilst our policy rises equally above these two incomplete and incoherent tendencies, we are far from equally condemning in the present the two parties which represent them. During the thirty years of my philosophical and social career, I have ever felt a profound contempt for that which, under our different governments, bore the name of *the Opposition*, and a secret affinity for all constructive statesmen. Even those who would build with materials evidently worn out seemed to me constantly preferable to the mere destructives, in a century in which general reconstruction is everywhere the chief want. Our official conservatives are behindhand, it is true, but our mere revolutionists seem to me still more alien to the true spirit of our time. They continue blindly, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the negative direction which could only suit the eighteenth, without redeeming this stagnation by those generous aspirations after a universal renovation which distinguished their predecessors.

Hence it is that, though the popular sympathies are instinctively with them, power constantly passes to their opponents, who at least have recognised the impotence for organising of the metaphysical doctrines, and seek elsewhere for principles of reconstruction. With the majority of these last, their retrograde attitude is, at bottom, but a provisional choice of the least evil as against an impending anarchy, without any real theological convictions. Though all statesmen seem for the moment to belong to this school, we may assert confidently that it only supplies the formulas indispensable for the co-ordination of their empirical views, whilst waiting for the more real and stable connection to spring from a new doctrine of universal applicability.

Such is certainly the only temporal governor of real

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eminence of whom up to the present time our century can boast, the noble Czar who, whilst he gives his immense empire all the progress compatible with its actual condition, preserves it by his energy and prudence from useless ferment. His sagacity, however empirical, leads him to see that the West alone is charged with the glorious and difficult mission of laying the foundations of human regeneration, which the East has subsequently and peaceably to appropriate as it shall rise. He seems to me to be even conscious that this immense elaboration was reserved specially for the great Western centre, the spontaneous action of which, though of necessity disorderly, is the only one which should always be respected, as absolutely indispensable to the common solution. The habitual agitation of all the remainder of the West, though more difficult to restrain than that of the East, is in reality almost equally prejudicial to the natural course of the final regeneration, for it tends without ground to displace its principal centre, which the whole of the past fixes in France.

Our situation in the West so excludes the simply revolutionary point of view that it reserves for the opposite camp the production of the maxims which best express it. Not forgetting the memorable practical formula,* the author of which was a democrat fortunately without literary training, it is among pure conservatives that the most profound political sentence of the nineteenth century had its birth—*To destroy you must replace*. The author of this admirable sentence, equally excellent in expression and thought, presents, however, nothing remarkable in point of intellect. His only real recommendation is a rare combination of the three practical qualities—energy, prudence, and perseverance. But the constructive point of view so tends at present to enlarge

* *Il faut faire de l'ordre avec du désordre*—Your materials are disorder, with them you must organise order.—M. Caussidière.

conceptions, that, given a favourable situation, it can by itself suggest to an intellect of small depth a really profound principle, which is adopted and systematically developed by Positivism.

Be this as it may, the retrograde nature of the worn-out doctrines which our conservatives provisionally employ, must disqualify them absolutely for directing political action in the midst of an anarchy which had its origin in the irremediable weakness of the old beliefs. The West can no longer submit its reason to the guidance of opinions which evidently admit of no demonstration; nay, which are radically chimerical, as are all opinions derived from theology, even if reduced to its fundamental dogma. All now recognise that our practical activity must cease to waste itself on mutual hostilities, in order peaceably to develop our drawing out in common the resources of man's planet. But still less can we persist in the state of intellectual and moral childhood in which our conduct rests only on motives which are absurd and degrading. Without ever repeating the eighteenth century, the nineteenth must always continue its work, realising at length the noble aspiration of a demonstrated religion directing pacific activity.

Now that our circumstances set aside every simply negative tendency, the only ones of the philosophical schools of the last century really discredited are the illogical sects whose predominance was necessarily very short. The incomplete destructives, such as Voltaire and Rousseau, who thought that they could overthrow the altar and preserve the throne, or the converse, are fallen without possibility of rising, after ruling, such was the destiny allotted them, the two generations which prepared and achieved the revolutionary explosion. But, ever since reconstruction has been the order of the day, the attention of men reverts more and more to the great and immortal school of Diderot and Hume, which will really give its stamp to the eighteenth century, connecting

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it with the seventeenth through Fontenelle, and with the nineteenth through Condorcet. Equally emancipated in religion and politics, these powerful thinkers necessarily tended towards a total and direct reorganisation, confused though its conception must then be. All of them would now rally in support of the only doctrine which, basing the future on the past, at length lays a perfectly firm foundation for the regeneration of the West. It is from this school that I shall always consider it an honour to be descended in a direct line through my leading precursor, the eminent Condorcet. On the other hand, I never expected anything but hindrances, intentional or not, from the belated relics of the superficial and immoral sects sprung from Voltaire and Rousseau.

But with this great historical stock I have always connected whatever of real eminence came from our latest adversaries, whether theological or metaphysical. Whilst Hume is my principal precursor in philosophy, Kant comes in as an accessory; his fundamental conception was never really systematised and developed but by Positivism. So, under the political aspect, Condorcet required, for me, to be completed by De Maistre, from whom, at the commencement of my career, I appropriated all his leading principles, which now find no adequate appreciation except in the Positive school. These, with Bichat and Gall as my precursors in science, are the six immediate predecessors who will ever connect me with the three fathers of the true modern philosophy—Bacon, Descartes, and Leibnitz. Carrying on this noble genealogy, the Middle Ages, intellectually condensed in St. Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, and Dante, place me in direct subordination to the eternal prince of true thinkers, the incomparable Aristotle.

Retracing our steps as far as this true fountain-head, we feel deeply that, since the adequate extension of Rome's dominion, the more advanced populations are vainly seeking for an universal religion. Experience

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has made it quite clear that no supernatural belief can satisfy this ultimate longing. Two incompatible Monotheisms equally aimed at this necessary universality, without which Humanity could not follow her natural destiny. But their opposed efforts only resulted in their mutually neutralising each other, so as to reserve this attribute for doctrines susceptible of demonstration and admitting discussion. For more than five centuries, Islam renounces the conquest of the West, and Catholicism abandons to its eternal rival even the tomb of its pretended founder. These vain spiritual aspirations have not even been able to extend over the whole territory of the old temporal rule, divided with an almost equal division between the two irreconcilable Monotheisms.

The East and the West, then, must seek, apart from all theology or metaphysics, the systematic bases of their intellectual and moral communion. This long-expected fusion, which must afterwards gradually embrace the whole of mankind, can evidently only come from Positivism, that is, from a doctrine whose invariable characteristic is the combination of the real with the useful. Long limited to the simplest phenomena, its theories have there produced the only really universal convictions which as yet exist. But this natural privilege of the Positive methods and doctrines cannot for ever be confined to the domain of mathematics and physics. First developed in the sphere of natural order, it thence passed naturally to the vital order, whence it has lately extended finally to the human order, collective or individual. This decisive completeness of the Positive spirit now does away with every pretext for preserving, by artificial means, the theological spirit, which has come to be, in modern Europe, as disturbing as the metaphysical, of which it is both historically and dogmatically the source. Besides, the moral and political degradation of the theological priesthood had long precluded any

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hope of restraining, as in the Middle Ages, the vices of the doctrine by the instinctive sagacity of its best interpreters.

Instinctively abandoned henceforward to its natural decay, the monotheistic belief, Christian or Musulman, deserves more and more the unfavourable judgment which, during the three centuries of its rise to power, it elicited from the noblest statesmen and philosophers of the Roman world. Not able at that time to judge the system but by the doctrine, they hesitated not to reject, as the enemy of the human race, a provisional religion which placed perfection in detachment from earth. Modern instinct reprobates still more strongly a morality which proclaims that the benevolent sentiments are foreign to our nature, which so misunderstands the dignity of labour as to refer its origin to a divine curse, and which makes woman the source of all evil. Tacitus and Trajan could not foresee that, for some centuries, the wisdom of the priesthood, aided by favourable circumstances, would so far check the natural defects of such doctrines, as to draw from them, provisionally, admirable results for society. But now that the Western priesthood has become hopelessly retrograde, its belief, left to itself, tends to give free scope to the immoral character which is inherent in its anti-social nature. It deserved the respectful treatment of prudent conservatives only so far as it was impossible to substitute for it a better conception of the world and of man—a conception entirely dependent on the slow rise of the Positive spirit. But this laborious initiation being now complete, Positivism definitively eliminates Catholicism, as every other form of theologism, by virtue even of the admirable social maxim above quoted.

After fully satisfying the intelligence and the activity, the Positive religion, ever impelled by the reality which characterises it, has extended in due form even to feeling, which is henceforth its principal domain and becomes the

basis of its unity. We see no reason to fear then that any true thinkers, theoretical or practical, can at the present day, as in the early days of Catholicism, fail to see the superiority of a real and complete faith, which, far from being social by accident, shows itself such by its inherent nature. For the rest, it is for the nascent priesthood of Positivism and for all its true disciples, by their conduct as men and citizens, to secure on grounds of experience a due appreciation of its excellence, even from those who cannot directly judge its principles. A doctrine which shall always develop all the human virtues, personal, domestic, and civic, will soon be respected by all its honest opponents, whatever may be their ungrounded predilection for an absolute and egoistic synthesis, as opposed to a relative and altruistic one.

But, to establish this crucial competition, it was necessary first to so condense Positivism that it may become really popular. This is the particular object of this small exceptional work, for which I interrupt, for some weeks, my great religious construction, of which the first half only is as yet accomplished. I had thought at first that this valuable episode should be postponed until the entire completion of that immense work. But after writing, in January 1851, the Positive theory of human unity, I felt sufficiently forward to allow me to introduce such an interlude after the volume in which that theory forms the first and most important chapter. Growing, as I worked out that capital volume, this hope became mature when I wrote its final preface. I realise it to-day, before I begin the construction of *Dynamical Sociology*, which will be the special subject of the third volume of my *System of Positive Politics*, to be published next year.

Due to the unexpected ripeness of my principal conceptions, this resolution was greatly strengthened by the fortunate crisis which has just abolished the parliamentary regime and instituted a dictatorial republic, the

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two preliminary conditions of any true regeneration. It is quite true that this dictatorship by no means wears as yet the character set forth as essential in my *Positivist Lectures* of 1847. What it most wants is to be compatible with full freedom of exposition and even of discussion—a freedom absolutely indispensable for spiritual reorganisation, not to say that it alone can reassure us against all retrograde tyranny. But under one form or other, this necessary complement will before long be attained, which seems to me to involve, as the preceding phases, one last violent crisis. Once attained, its advent on empirical grounds will soon determine the peaceful creation of the systematic triumvirate which gives its form and expression to the temporal dictatorship put forward, in the *Lectures* above mentioned, as the government adapted to the organic transition. Without, however, waiting for these two new phases of our revolutionary experiment, the actual dictatorship already permits the direct propagation of renovating thought. The freedom of exposition which as a natural consequence it brings to all really constructive thinkers by breaking at length the sterile sway of the talkers, naturally acted as a special invitation to me to direct the thoughts of women and proletaries towards the basis of thorough renovation.

This work, then—an episode—by furnishing a systematic basis for the active propagation of Positivism, necessarily forwards my principal construction, for it brings the new religion to its true social audience. However solid the logical and scientific bases of the intellectual discipline instituted by Positive Philosophy, its severe regime is too antipathetic to our present mental state for it ever to prevail without the irresistible support of women and the proletaries. The urgent need of it can only be soundly appreciated by these two social masses, which, alien to all pretension to teaching, can alone enforce on their systematic chiefs the encyclopedic

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conditions demanded by their social office. This is why I was bound not to shrink from introducing into the popular language philosophical terms which are absolutely indispensable, terms not created by Positivism, but of which it has systematised the meaning and fostered the use. Such are, in particular, two pairs of essential value as characteristic formulas, first *Static* and *Dynamic*, then *Objective* and *Subjective*, without which my exposition would remain inadequate. Once properly defined, especially by their uniform use, their judicious employment greatly facilitates instead of obscuring philosophical explanations. I do not scruple in this work to consecrate expressions which the Positive religion must at once pass into universal circulation, considering the high importance of their use from the intellectual and even the moral point of view.

Thus led to compose a true Catechism for the Religion of Humanity, I had first to examine, on rational principles, the form always adopted for such expositions, the dialogue. I soon found in it a fresh instance of the happy instinct by which practical wisdom often anticipates the conclusions of sound theory. Fresh from the special work of constructing the Positive theory of human language, I felt at once that since expression should always issue in communication, its natural form is the dialogue. Further, as all combinations, even physical, and still more logical, are binary, the dialogue admits, under pain of confusion, only one interlocutor. The monologue is in reality adapted only to conception, limiting itself to the formal expression of its process, as if one were thinking aloud, without reference to any hearer. When language is used not merely to assist the investigations of the reason, but to direct the communication of its results, then it requires a fresh shape, specially adapted to this transfer of ideas. Then we must take into account the peculiar state of the listener, and foresee the modifications which the natural course

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of such exposition will call for. In a word, the simple statement must thus become a real conversation. Nor can its essential conditions be satisfactorily met except by assuming one single and clearly determined interlocutor. But if this type is judiciously chosen, it may, for ordinary use, adequately represent every reader; since indeed it were not possible to vary the mode of exposition to meet the exigencies of each individual, as may be done in actual conversation.

A discourse, then, which is in the full sense didactic, ought to differ essentially from one simply logical, in which the thinker freely follows his own course, paying no attention to the natural conditions of all communication. Still, to avoid the great labour of recasting one's thoughts, in general we limit ourselves to laying them before others as we originally thought them; though this rough method of exposition largely contributes to the scanty efficacy of most of our reading. The dialogue, the proper form for all real communication, is reserved for the setting forth of such conceptions as are at once important enough and ripe enough to demand it. This is why, in all times, religious instruction is given in the form of conversation and not of simple statement. Far from betraying a negligence excusable only in cases of secondary importance, this form, rightly managed, is, on the contrary, the only mode of exposition which is really didactic: it suits equally every intelligence. But the difficulties attendant on the new elaboration which it requires justify our not adopting it for ordinary communications. It would be childish to aim at such perfection for any instruction not of fundamental interest. On the other hand, this transformation for the purposes of teaching is only practicable where the doctrines are sufficiently worked out for us to be able to distinctly compare the different methods of expounding them as a whole, and to easily foresee the objections which they will naturally elicit.

Were I bound here to point out all the general principles applicable to the art of communication, I should dwell on the improvements admissible in regard to style. Especially devoted to the expression of feelings, poets have always felt how superior is verse to prose for that expression, to render artificial language more esthetic, by bringing it nearer to natural language. Now, the same reasons would equally apply to the communication of thoughts, if we had to attach as much importance to it. Conciseness of language and the aid of imagery, the two essential characteristics of true versification, would be as appropriate for perfecting the exposition of thought as the expansion of feeling. So, perfect communication would require not merely the substitution of dialogue for monologue, but also that of verse for prose. This second improvement in teaching, however, must be still more of an exception than the first, because of the additional labour it requires. It presupposes even a greater maturity in the conceptions to be expressed, not only in their interpreter but also in the audience, which has, by an effort of its own, to fill up at once the gaps left by poetical concision. This is why several admirable poems are still only in prose, the imperfection of the form being at the time excusable, where the subject was not generally familiar. An analogous motive acted more strongly against putting into verse any religious catechism. But the reality and spontaneity which distinguish the Positive belief will enable it in time to introduce this last improvement into its popular exposition, when that belief shall begin to spread sufficiently to admit of conciseness and imagery. Only provisionally, then, need we feel limited in it to the substitution of the dialogue for the monologue.

In accordance with this special theory as to the didactic form, I was led not only to justify previous practice, but even to improve upon it, so far as concerns the interlocutor. By leaving the hearer completely unde-

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terminated, the dialogue became extremely vague, and as such even almost illusory. Having placed on rational grounds the empirical adoption of the dialogue, I soon felt that it would remain incomplete, and if incomplete, inadequate, so long as it was not clear who the second person was, at least to the author. Unless you set before you a real, although in the immediate instance, an ideal communication, you cannot draw out to the full all the inherent advantages of such a form. Then you institute a real conversation, as distinct from a statement thrown into dialogue.

Applying at once this clear principle, I naturally chose the angelic interlocutress who, after only one year of direct living influence, has been now for more than six years subjectively associated with all my thoughts as with all my feelings. It is through her that I have at length become for Humanity an organ in the strictest sense twofold, as may any one who has worthily submitted to woman's influence. Without her I should never have been able practically to make the career of St. Paul follow on that of Aristotle, by founding the universal religion on true philosophy, after I had extracted the latter from real science. The constant purity of our exceptional connection, and even the admirable superiority of the angel who never received due recognition, are moreover already fully appreciated by nobler minds. When, four years ago, I revealed this incomparable inspiration by the publication of my *Discourse on the System of Positivism*, she could at first only be judged by its intellectual and moral results, thenceforward appreciable by the sympathetic heart as by the synthetic mind. But last year the three introductory pieces, which will ever be the distinctive feature of the first volume of my *System of Positive Politics*, enabled all to directly appreciate this eminent nature. Hence, when I recently published the second volume of the same treatise, I was already able to openly congratulate myself on the touching

unanimity of marked sympathy which both sexes feel towards the new Beatrice. These three public antecedents dispel at once all doubt as to my sainted hearer, with whom the duly prepared reader is sufficiently acquainted for our conversations to possess their own peculiar and immediate interest.

Such a catechumen meets perfectly all the essential conditions of the best form of teaching. Superior though she was, Madame Clotilde de Vaux was yet so early snatched from me that it was impossible sufficiently to initiate her in Positivism, the point to which her own wishes and efforts tended. Before death broke off finally this affectionate instruction, pain and grief had seriously impeded it. When I now accomplish subjectively the systematic preparation which I could hardly enter upon during her life, my angelic disciple brings with her nothing beyond the primary dispositions to be found in most women, and even in many proletaries. In all those souls which Positivism has not yet reached, I presuppose solely, as in my eternal companion, a profound desire to know the religion which can overcome the modern anarchy, and a sincere veneration for its priest. I should even prefer for readers those in whom no scholastic training interferes with the spontaneous fulfilment in fair degree of these two previous conditions.

All who know my general institution of the true guardian angels, already sufficiently explained in my *Positive Politics*, are aware, moreover, that the principal female type becomes in it habitually inseparable from the two others. This sweet connection holds good, even in the exceptional case which presents to me in combination, in my pure and immortal companion, the subjective mother my second life presupposes, and the objective daughter who should have added grace to my transient existence. From the time that her invariable reserve had so purified my affection as to raise it to the level of her own, all I

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aspired to was the openly avowed union which should follow on a legal adoption, suitable to our disparity in age. When I shall publish our noble correspondence, my last letter will give direct evidence of this holy project, the only one which, under our respective destinies, was compatible with repose and happiness.

It is then without effort that I proceed to use in this catechism the personal designations habitually used in religious instruction. More even than the priesthood of theology does the priesthood of Positivism require in its priests complete maturity, most particularly by virtue of its immense encyclopedic preparation. This is why I have fixed the ordination of the priests of Humanity at forty-two, the age at which the development of the body and the brain is completely ended, as is also the first social life. The names of *father* and *daughter* become then peculiarly appropriate as between the teacher and the catechumen, in conformity with the old etymology of the word priest. By using them here, I naturally approximate to the personal relations amid which I should have lived had it not been for our fatal catastrophe.

But this concentration of the holy conversation on the presiding angel ought not to conceal from the reader, any more than from myself, that my two other patronesses take constantly an appropriate though silent part in it. The venerable mother and the noble adopted daughter, whose subjective influence and objective service I have elsewhere explained, will always here be present to my heart when my intellect shall be duly feeling the dominant impulse. For the future become inseparable, these three angels are so my own that their constant co-operation has lately suggested to the eminent artist, whom Positivism now claims with pride, an admirable esthetic inspiration, which converts a mere portrait into a picture of profound meaning.

A didactic conversation on this plan renders my own

labour easier as well as that of my reader. For such a public exposition comes very near the private explanations for which my sainted companion would have naturally asked me had our objective union lasted longer, as is already clear from my philosophical letter on Marriage. The very period of the year at which I accomplish this pleasant task recalls with peculiar force her own unsuggested wishes, during our incomparable year, for a methodical initiation. I have only then to carry myself back seven years to conceive, as actually spoken, that which I must now develop subjectively, by placing myself, in 1852, in the situation of 1845. But this effort of transposition brings with it the precious compensation that I am able to give a better idea of the angelic ascendancy which I can only adequately characterise by combining two admirable verses, respectively meant for Beatrice and Laura—

Quella che imparadisa la mia mente *
 Ogni basso pensier dal cor m'avulse. †

She who doth imparadise my soul (*Cary*)
 Tore from my heart every low thought.

This tardy accomplishment of an initiation prompted by affection brings it moreover into fuller agreement with the paternal feelings which finally prevailed towards her who will always be associated with me as at once disciple and colleague. Her age having become fixed, in obedience to the general law of the subjective life, mine exceeds it more and more, so as even now to allow only filial images. This more perfect continuity of our two lives perfects also the whole harmony of my own nature. In thus explaining the Positive constitution of human unity, I am developing and consolidating the fundamental connection between my private and my public life. The philosophical influence of the angel who in-

* Dante, *Par.* xxviii. 3. † Petrarch, Sonnet lxxxvi. 8.

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spires me becomes then as complete and as direct as it ever can be, and consequently beyond dispute in the eyes of all. I venture then to hope that, to enable me to testify my just gratitude, the nobler minds will soon by their due aid supply the deficiency of which I am profoundly conscious in the midst of my best daily prayers, as was Dante in regard to his sweet patroness—

Non è l' affezion mia tanto profonda
 Che basti a render voi grazia per grazia.
 —*Par. iv. 121.*

Affection fails me to requite thy grace
 With equal sum of gratitude.—CARY'S *Translation.*

But this gratitude of the public must, equally with my own, embrace the two other guardian angels who complete the presiding female influence over me. However distant, alas ! the imposing memory of the perfect Catholicism which swayed my noble and tender mother, it will always be an incitement to me to give precedence, more than in my youth, to the constant cultivation of feeling over that of intellect and even of activity. On the other hand, were a too exclusive sense of the necessity of basing all real public virtue on private goodness to lead me to undervalue the importance of civic morality, an importance inherent in it and directly its own, I should soon correct myself by the admirable sociability of my third patroness. I undertake this episodic work, then, under the especial assistance of all my angels, although two of them can only co-operate silently, without prejudice to their personal claims to the veneration of all.

Looked at from a more general point of view, this form of teaching tends directly to convey a strong impression of the character of the religion to be taught. For, of itself, it brings out the fundamental nature of the Positive system which, aiming above all at the systematic dis-

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cipline of all the powers of man, rests principally on the constant concurrence of feeling with reason to regulate activity. Now, this series of conversations always represents the heart and the intellect as combining in religious union to moralise the material power to which the world of action is necessarily subjected. In that world the woman and the priest are, in fact, the two indispensable elements of the true moderating power, which is at once domestic and civic. In organising this holy coalition in the interests of society, each constituent proceeds here in conformity with its true nature: the heart states the questions, the intellect answers them. Thus the very form of this Catechism points at once to the great central idea of Positivism: man thinking under the inspiration of woman, to bring synthesis into constant harmony with sympathy in order to regularise synergy.

The adoption of this method for the new religious instruction shows that it addresses by preference the sex in which affection predominates. This preference, quite in accordance with the true spirit of the final regime, is in an especial manner adapted to the last transition, in which every influence recognised by the normal state must always work with greater strength, if with less regularity. The better proletaries are likely, it seems to me, ere long to welcome heartily this short but decisive work; yet it is more suited to women, especially to women without instruction. They alone can fully understand the preponderance that ought to be given to the habitual cultivation of the heart, so borne down by the coarse activity, both in speculation and action, which prevails in the modern Western world. It is solely in this sanctuary that, at the present day, we can find the noble submissiveness of spirit required for a systematic regeneration. During the last four years, the reason of the people has suffered profoundly from the unfortunate exercise of universal suffrage; it had previously been preserved from

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the constitutional sophisms and Parliamentary intrigues of which the rich and the literary class had had the monopoly. Developing a blind pride, our proletaries have thought themselves able to settle the highest social questions without submitting to any serious study. Though this deterioration is much less in the southern populations of the West, the resistance of Catholicism sheltering them against the metaphysics of Protestantism or Deism, the reading negative books is beginning to spread it too much even there. I see none anywhere but women, who, as a consequence of their wholesome exclusion from political action, can give me the support required to secure the free ascendancy of the principles which shall in the end qualify the proletaries to place their confidence aright on points of theory as well as on points of practice.

Besides, the deep-seated mental anarchy justifies this special appeal of the Positive religion to the affective sex, as it renders more necessary than ever the predominance of feeling, the sole existing preservative of Western society from a complete and irreparable dissolution. Since the close of the Middle Ages, the influence of women has been the sole though unacknowledged check on the moral evils attaching to the mental alienation towards which the West more and more tended, especially its centre—France. This chronic unreason being henceforth at its height, since there is no social maxim but succumbs to a corrosive discussion, feeling alone maintains order in the West. But feeling even is seriously weakened already by the reaction of the sophisms of the intellect, these being always favourable to the personal instincts which are, moreover, the more energetic.

Of the three sympathetic instincts which belong to our true cerebral constitution, the first and last are much weakened, and the intermediate nearly extinct, in the majority of the men who take an active part at present in Western agitation. Penetrate to the interior