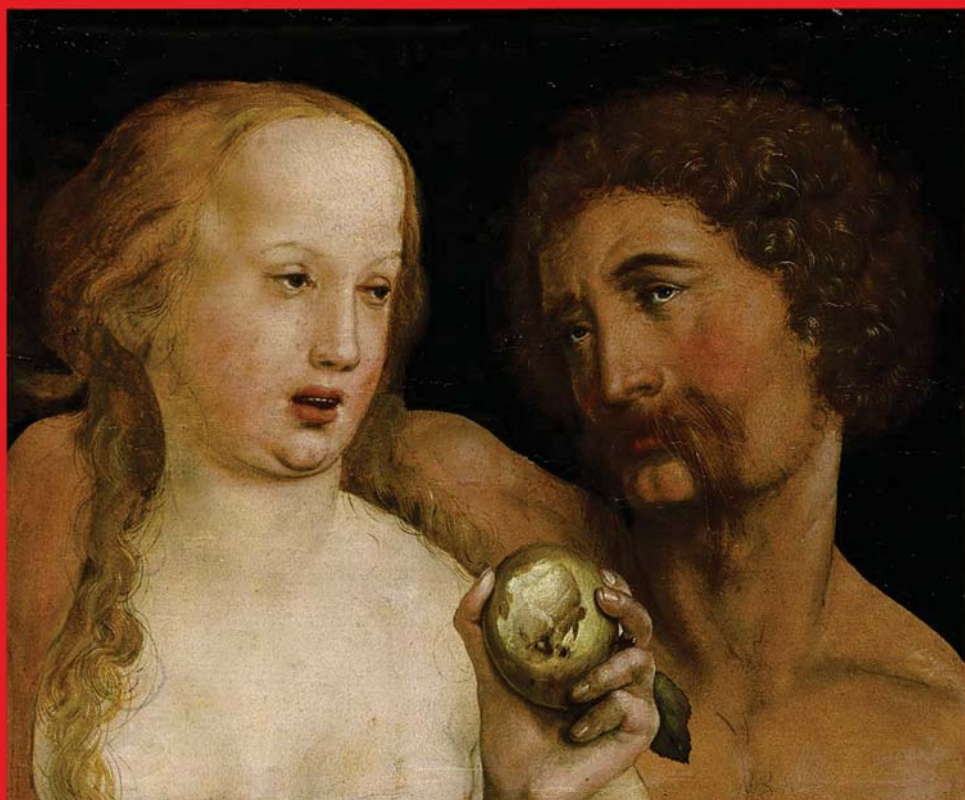


History of Sexuality

VOLUME 1



Karlheinz Deschner

BERSERKER

BOOKS



"Although Christianity today is on the verge of spiritual bankruptcy, it still decisively permeates our sexual morality, and the formal limitations of our erotic life remain basically the same as in the 15th or 5th centuries, in the time of Luther or St. Augustine. And that affects all of us in the Western world, even non-Christians or anti-Christians. For what some nomadic goat herders thought two and a half thousand years ago still determines the official codes from Europe to America; there is still a tangible connection between the ideas about sexuality of the OT prophets or Paul and the criminal prosecutions for dishonest behaviour in Rome, Paris or New York". (K. Deschner - beginning of the Foreword).

"A power with pretensions to absolute truth is forced, if it wants to maintain its authority in the present, to retouch historical memory, to arbitrarily re-enact the past, even to erase the traces of its atrocities. Such is the case of the Church. The finesse and conceptual complexity with which it carries out such manipulations misleads those who are unaccustomed to historical analysis and are ignorant of thousands of facts, i.e. the vast majority.

Deschner's work has the virtue of reconstructing a central aspect of the history of Christianity. Thus, an ecclesiastical face emerges that is very different from the one achieved by the aforementioned make-up. The religion of love presents a baleful physiognomy, unfriendly to humanity. And not at all friendly to its most direct servants, the priests, who became victims and accomplices of a despotic institution that, at a given moment, deprived them of their wives and legitimate children and, when the times changed, instigated them to concubinage.

This historical reconstruction is a huge research effort, but it is presented with rigour and enjoyment. The Acts send us through the centuries a message, both painful and exhilarating, which is a useful provocation and a challenge.

for the intellectual and moral formation of each person" (Catholic historian F. Heer).

FOREWORD

Although Christianity today is on the verge of spiritual bankruptcy, still decisively permeates our sexual morality and the formal limitations of our erotic life remain basically the same as in the 15th or 5th centuries, in the time of Luther or St. Augustine.

And that affects all of us in the Western world, even non-Christians and anti-Christians. For what some nomadic goat herders thought two and a half thousand years ago continues to determine official codes from Europe to America; there remains a tangible connection between the ideas about sexuality of the OT prophets or Paul and the criminal prosecutions for dishonest conduct in Rome, Paris or New York. And it is perhaps no coincidence that one of the most eloquent advocates of free sex, the Frenchman Rene Guyon, was a jurist who, to his dying day, demanded the abolition of all sexual taboos as well as the radical elimination of all ideas that associated sexual activity with the concept of immorality.

In the Federal Republic of Germany there is still a tendency today to equate law and morality, and especially decency and sexual morality, which is an unmistakable legacy of the Christian repression of the instincts. With tiresome monotony, the legislator resorts to "the sense of decency", "the current moral order", "the fundamental moral conceptions of the people" and so on - formulas behind which there is nothing more than the old animosity of the Fathers of the Church against sexuality. In the same way, the Constitutional Court can openly invoke the "public religious communities, (...) in particular the two major ones".

Christian denominations, from whose doctrines a large part of the people draw the rules for their moral behaviour". As a result, the legal rules on marriage, contraception, statutory rape, relations with minors and so on are conditioned in such a way that Ernst-Walter Hanack can lapidary describe the current criminal law on sexual matters as "largely inappropriate, superfluous or dishonest".

In other European countries, however, the situation is very similar; the church's prohibition of incest or abortion, for example, has a decisive influence on justice; the concept of indecency even extends to marriages, and the worst execrations are applied to any such offence; children born out of wedlock cannot even be legitimised by a subsequent marriage; the advertising of contraception is prosecuted with monetary penalties, imprisonment or both; the protection of marriage is enforced in hotels and tourist enterprises; and all this, and more, is in complete harmony with church morality.

Likewise, in the USA, religion is an extremely strong determinant of law, especially decisions about sexual conduct, and creates the hypocritical and prudish climate that still characterises Puritan states.

And regardless of the dominant form of justice or injustice (which of course is always the justice or injustice of the dominators), traditional sexual morality remains in effect, taboos remain in place. They have been inculcated too deeply in all social strata. Permissiveness and tolerance still persecuted as in the past; morality still equals sexual morality everywhere, even in Sweden.

Apart from theology, justice, and even certain specialities of medicine and psychology, biblical superstition harms our sexual life, and therefore, in short, our life.

It is unwise, therefore, to believe that the clerical code of taboos has succumbed, that hostility to pleasure has disappeared and women have been emancipated. In the same way that today we are amused by the

medieval monk's shirt (infra), generations to come will laugh at us and our "free love": a sex life that is not allowed to be shown in public, locked within walls, confined most of the time to the darkness of the night is, like all shady business, a climax of joy and pleasure bounded by censors, regulated by laws, threatened by punishments, surrounded by whispers, perverted, a particular back room hidden for a lifetime.

From St. Paul to St. Augustine, from the scholastics to the two discredited popes of the fascist era, the greatest spirits of Catholicism have cultivated a permanent fear of sexuality, an unprecedented sexual syndrome, a singular atmosphere of prudishness and pharisaism, of repression. They have shrouded with moral taboos and exorcisms the whole of human life, their joy of feeling and existing biological mechanisms of pleasure and outbursts of passion, they have systematically generated shame and fear, an intimate state of siege and systematically exploited it; out of sheer lust for power, or because they themselves were victims and repressors of those instincts, because themselves, having been tormented, have tormented others, figuratively or literally.

Corroded by envy and at the same time with calculated premeditation they corrupted in their faithful the most harmless, the most joyful thing: the experience of pleasure, the experience of love. The Church has perverted almost all the values of sexual life, has called Good evil and Evil good, has stamped honesty as dishonest, positive as negative. It has prevented or hindered the satisfaction of natural desires and instead made it a duty to fulfil unnatural commands, through the sanction of eternal life and the most earthly or the most extremely barbaric penances.

Certainly, one may wonder whether all the other misdeeds of Christianity - the eradication of paganism, the slaughter of Jews, the burning of heretics and witches, the Crusades, the wars of religion, the murder of Indians and blacks, as well as all the other atrocities (including the millions and millions of victims of World War I, World War II and the long Vietnam War) - one is entitled to

to wonder, I say, if indeed this extraordinary history of crime was not less devastating than the enormous moral mutilation and vicious education by that church cultivator of abstinence, coercion, hatred of sexuality, and above all if the irradiation of clerical oppression of sexuality does not extend from the private neurosis and unhappy life of the individual to the massacres of whole peoples, and even if many of the greatest butcheries of Christianity have not been, directly or indirectly, a consequence of morality.

A society that is sick of its own morality can only be healed, in any , by doing without that morality, i.e. its religion. This does not mean that a world without Christianity has to be healthy, *per se*. But with Christianity, with the Church, it must be sick. Two thousand years are more than enough proof of this. Here too, finally, Lichtenberg's statement applies: "I certainly cannot say whether it will get better by changing, but I can at least say that it must change in order to get better".

KARLHEINZ DESCHNER

INTRODUCTION: SACRAL SEXUALITY

Christianity has taken from us the fruit of the culture of antiquity (...)

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

This Sexual History of Christianity first appeared in 1974. Since then it has gone through nine editions and has lost none of its explosiveness and relevance: quite the contrary!

In this updated edition, the tenth, we give an account of recent changes within the Catholic Church. It contains for the first time an overview of the development of the Catholic Church's different approaches to sexuality from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II.

CHAPTER 1

THE MOTHER GODDESS

The first area sacred of the epoch primitive is probably where women have given birth.

ERICH NEUMANN ^[1]

For those who have a true knowledge of divine things, there is nothing more exalted than the Mother.

A 4th century Greek poet

Sexuality is not exhausted in the physiological. Nor is it simply a part of our existence, but permeates it completely. It accompanies the human being, as a Christian theologian writes, from the cradle to the last breath. "If one could draw a sexual curve of life, it would be a faithful reflection of life itself" ^[2].

The fundamental meaning of sex is expressed in the beliefs of all peoples, originally always in a positive way.

The primordial mothers

In prehistoric times, when mankind was small, life spans short, and infant mortality high, the reproductive capacity of women was the main chance of survival for the clan, horde or lineage. Female fertility was, however, distrusted, not

recognised even as a consequence of mating, but as the intervention of a numinous power, which gave women a special significance, a magical character. She was a primordial mystery ^[3]. The father, on the other hand, remained unknown, as much as the father god ("Mater semper certa, pater semper incertus", as Roman law still goes on to say).

So it is no coincidence that the oldest Palaeolithic statuettes that have come down to us are for the most part female representations, primordial mothers or fertility idols, as most researchers accept, rather than Ice Age obscenities. Almost without exception they are older women, mother figures. Everything individual, and especially the face, is concealed, but the sexual characteristics (breasts, womb, genitals), on the other hand, are highlighted in such a way that they appear as "the only real thing". All in an advanced state of gestation, they are evidently materialisations of the primordial, illuminating and reproductive energy of women, early forerunners of the mother goddesses ^[4].

If matriarchy is older than patriarchy, as research increasingly confirms, the cult of the Great Mother Goddess most likely precedes that of the Father God; its anteriority is repeatedly attested from Greece to Mexico. Likewise, the oldest human social relationship must be that of mother and child. The mother serves as the nexus in the early family, she watches over and gives birth. Thus she becomes the representative of Mother Earth, of Mother Moon, of the Great Mother ^[5]. This worship of the Great Female had been favoured by the economic development of the Late Ice Age and by the provisional sedentarisation of the hunters of central Eurasia. Under these conditions, the female head of the entire lineage not only ensured the survival of the clan, but also took care of food and clothing and, as the central figure in the common household, even strengthened the bonds between the dwellers. When this sedentary lifestyle came to an end, female sculptures disappear with it.

However, in the Neolithic period, when graphic images and male symbols of fertility gradually began to be found, there are, from around the fifth or fourth millennium, a large number of statuettes

female. The oldest ones come from Western Asia, especially from around the temples. The head is barely insinuated and, on the other hand, the sexual characteristics (breasts, belly and vulva) are again strongly accentuated. In addition, most of them are depicted in the preliminaries to childbirth, i.e. squatting, as is still the case today in the Near East. At that time, figures of this type were mass-produced and sold to visitors to temples. In south-eastern Europe, too, female cult figurines were produced, which must have belonged to various types of trousseaux. They can be found all over Europe: in Spain, France, Ireland and also in the Northeast.

Women: "The continuation of the earth".

In this way, over time, the idea of a divine mother takes shape, especially in regions of agrarian colonisation ^[6]. Their religion is closely connected with the economic revolution brought about by the first cultivation of crops, an agrarian form of economy and existence which originated in Asia many millennia before Christ and which gave women a growing status. As the centre of the clan and the dispenser of food (the household was also the first altar!), as the administrator of provisions, the producer of vessels and clothing, in short, as the creator of the foundations of human culture, she often achieved an extraordinary prestige, characterised, from the legal point of view, by maternal law and matrilineal succession and, from the religious point of view, precisely by the mother goddesses. For when humanity is linked to the soil and property, the significance of offspring increases, and with the fertility of the woman, the significance of the soil she works and with which the man unreservedly equates her on a mystical level, believing in a correlation of the reproductive function of both ⁽¹⁷⁾, also increases.

The earth, the motherly womb of all living things, always thought of as a maternal goddess, is "the most ancient divine figure, the most venerated, and also the most mysterious" or, as Sophocles puts it, "the most exalted among the

gods". According to the most ancient Greek beliefs, everything that grows and flows comes from her, including men and gods. In Greece, a number of widespread cults were dedicated to the Earth as the absolute mother, the great goddess of the most ancient Hellenic religion; at Olympia she preceded Zeus, at Delphi Apollo, at Sparta and Tegea there were altars consecrated to her. Even in the most ancient Indian sacred writings we read the expression "Mother Earth" [8].

And in matriarchal cultures the earth is equated with the woman, for life springs from both bodies, the lineage survives through both. In the woman the germinal force and fertility of nature are encapsulated, and nature gives life in analogy to the woman when she gives birth. Children and harvests appear as supernatural gifts, products of magical power. Until modern times, women have been more closely associated with fertility festivals and agricultural rites than men. "In relation to the earth, man is the stranger, woman the native (...) She is the continuation of the earth". These words are still used by the romantic physicist Johann Wilhelm Ritter [9].

The oldest human idol

In the first epoch of agrarian culture, female divinities appear everywhere, in whom the secret of fertility, the eternal cycle of succession and extinction, is worshipped. Throughout the Mediterranean region, throughout the Near East, and even in the Indian religion before the Aryans, festivals of fertility and maternity goddesses are celebrated, all eclipsed by the Great Mother, the creator of all life, who, although she was already imagined as a young girl, can be celebrated in Canaan, almost at the same time, as "maiden" and "grandmother of all peoples".

To worship her, men erect one temple after another, depicting her in a thousand forms, in monumental statues, in small idols, majesty, vitality, with pronounced hips and protruding vulva, but also as a slender, demonic vampire, with large eyes and an enigmatic gaze. Standing or from her throne, she suckles the divine child, radiates

energy and strength, the *sacrum sexuelle*. Seated and spread-eagled, she shows her sex (with the other gods lying at her feet). She squeezes her lush breasts, blesses, waves fertility symbols: lily stalks, sheaves of grain or snakes. She raises a bowl from which the water of life flows, and the folds of her dress overflow with fruit.

We have testimonies of her as the main goddess around 3200 BC. C. She was already known in Sumerian religion, the oldest religion of which we know anything: "at that time, there was not even mention of an Absolute Father" ^[10]. Her image is found in the sacred ark of Uruk, a Mesopotamian city whose origins go back to prehistoric times. She is worshipped in Nineveh, Babylon, Assur and Memphis. We can also discover her in the form of the Indian Mahadevi (great goddess); we see her in countless *matres* or *matrae* - the mother goddesses of the Celts, covered with flowers, fruits, horns of plenty or children - and, not least, we can identify her in Egypt under the features of Isis, the almost exact model of the Christian Mary.

Her appearance changes; she enters the scene either as a mother or as a warrior. The names of the goddesses change: "virgin" and "immaculate pregnant" or as a goddess of combat, on horseback and with weapons, and of course in various animal forms, for example in the shape of a fish, a mare or a cow. Their names also change. The Sumerians call her Inanna, the Kurrites Sauska, the Assyrians Militta, the Babylonians Istar, the Syrians Atargatis, the Phoenicians Astarte; the Old Testament writings call her Asherah, Anath or Baalath (the companion of Baal), the Phrygians Cybele, the Greeks Gaya, Rhea or Aphrodite, the Romans Magna Mater. The Emperor Augustus rebuilt her temples on the Palatine Hill, which had been destroyed by fire, and the Emperor Julian himself advocated her. Worshipped since prehistoric times, her image is "the oldest idol of mankind" and the most constant feature of archaeological evidence throughout the world.

The Great Mother, who appears in mountains and forests or by certain springs, whose life force and blessings are felt from year to year, is the guardian of the vegetable world, of the fruitful earth, the very idea of beauty, of sensual love, of overflowing sexuality, lady also of the animals. The most sacred animals for her are pigeons, fish and snakes: the pigeon is an ancient image of life, probably already

in the Neolithic; the fish, a typical symbol of the penis and fertility; and the snake, because of its similarity to the phallus, is also a sexual animal, expressing generation and strength. (In Christianity, so given to inverting values, the dove will represent the Holy Spirit, the fish will become the symbol of the Eucharist - the Greek word "ichthys" forms an anagram of the name "Jesus Christos Theou Hyios Soter" [Jesus Christos Theou Soter] - and the serpent will personify the negative from the first book of the Bible, being reduced to a symbol of Evil, which will slither furtively along the plinths or between the columns of medieval churches)^[11].

The Great Mother, however, is not only connected with the earth, with the telluric. Her radiance spreads - already among the Sumerians - "over the slope of Heaven"; she is "Lady of Heaven", goddess of the star Istar, the Morning and Evening Star, with which she is identified around 2000 B.C.; she is Belti, as the Babylonians also call her. B.C.; she is Belti, as she is also called by the Babylonians, i.e. literally, "Our Lady"; she is, according to Apuleius, "lady and mother of all things" the holy, clement and merciful, the virgin, a goddess who, without becoming pregnant, gives birth.

And, according to the most ancient testimonies, it enters the Lower World, where all earthly life is extinguished, until it is rescued again by the god Ea, lord, among the Sumerians and Babylonians, of the sea depths and the springs that flow from them.

The Great Mother is loved, extolled and courted, the hymns dedicated to her are reminiscent of the Old Testament psalms, to which they are not inferior in beauty or intimacy. In Greek mythology, she is the Magna Mater Deorum, the mother of Zeus, Poseidon and Hades.

"queen of all gods" "the foundation on which the divine state is built" ^[12]. In its Hindu variants, she is called Urna, Annapurna ("the one of plentiful food") or also Kali (the "black one") or Cani (the "wild one"). Thus, in the Mediterranean pantheon as well as in the Near Eastern or Hindu pantheon, she shows a sort of double face, having, alongside her creative and protective essence of life, a warlike, cruel, annihilating one: this is also repeated in Mary (infra). The "fertile mother" becomes "fierce mother" especially among the Assyrians, of course in Sparta, as a

goddess of war, and in India, as "the Dark One, all-devouring time, mistress of ossuaries, crowned with bones". "The heads of your recently deceased sons hang around your neck like a necklace" sings a Hindu poet. "Your figure is beautiful like rain clouds, your feet are all bloody" ^[13]. It reflects the circle of natural life, but above all the generative forces. For, just as it destroys, it creates anew; where it kills, it restores life: Night and Day, Birth and Death, Arising and Perishing, the horrors of life and its joys proceed from the same sources, all beings spring from the womb of the Great Mother and return to it.

The rise of the male god

However, if in the Neolithic there is an increasing number of fertility demons in addition to the once predominant fertility idols, then the male god also appears alongside the maternal goddess, which is a further - and not the least clear - reflection of the new situation in agrarian society: of the growing economic significance of man as a result of animal husbandry and agriculture. As a keeper of livestock and cultivator of the soil, men gradually acquired the same rights as women, as gardeners and gatherers, and above all, they were increasingly seen as procreators. And it was precisely this close cooperation in work, as well as the strengthening of the agrarian sense of the family and the role of parents, that now found their correspondence in the world of the gods. More and more male deities emerge: they are often still subordinate - as sons or lovers - to the female ones, but later they will equal them in rank and finally, in patriarchal cultures, they will become dominant. The Great Mother Goddess is dethroned and reduced to a subordinate divinity, then to a goddess of the nether world: an expression of the banishment of maternal religion. In the same way, the woman is lowered, her reproductive power diminished, while the prestige of the man, of the father, increases. Only the phallus is now recognised as having potency and vital force. Thus, Apollo proclaims in Aeschylus' Eumenides: "The mother

does not give life to the child, as they say. She nurtures the embryo. Life is created by the father" [14].

In any case, the male divinity comes to the fore late in the history of religion and obtains his dignity as the son of the mother goddess. The son of the mother goddess often becomes her lover, and thus arises the dualism characteristic of the great archaic cultures, the thought of polarities, the myth of the divine couple that conceives the world: Father Sky and Mother Earth, whose sacred marriage constitutes the focal point of worship and faith.

Heaven and Earth are the primordial couple, both in Greek myth and in that of distant New Zealand, where they are called Rangi and Papa. If in most cases Heaven is regarded as male, from earliest times Earth is seen as a female being, appearing again and again as a recumbent female, from whose vagina the human race emerges. Demeter (perhaps, "mother earth"), the Greek goddess of the earth, dispenser of fertility, according to a myth already known to Hornero, unites with Yasion "in a field ploughed three times" and gives birth to Pluto (Greek for "wealth"), the fertile harvests. Divine spouses or even siblings (in incestuous relationships) are imagined as a human couple, united in a kind of eternal embrace, in a permanent copulation: "the god of the sky endlessly fertilises (with rain, dew, sunbeams) the goddess of the earth"; a way of thinking that leads directly to the great rite of spring, to the sacred betrothal. "The limpid sky intends to wound the earth" writes Aeschylus, "and the labouring field is stirred with wedding longing. The rain falls from Heaven, longing for love, and impregnates the Earth. And she gives to mortals grass for cattle and grain for man; and the hour of the forest is consummated (...)"[15].

CHAPTER 2

IL SANTO MEMBRO

The heart of women longs for the generative member of man, and the heart of men for the vulva; the whole living world is subject to the sign of the vulva and the penis.

SHIVA Sentence

The god of fertility is the very organ of procreation.

ALAIN (EMILE CHARTIER)^[16]

Early on, humans sought to stimulate potency and fertility, and believed that the growth of fields would be accelerated by intensive copulation. Seed and harvest, pregnancy and birth were thought to be fundamentally the same. In India, the female is man's breeding ground, just as for Mohammed. And among the Etruscans, orgy was also an essential part of a world in which plough and phallus, sowing and fertilisation were confused.

Rituals of all ages have demonstrated this relationship, often dramatically. Thus the Chagga, a Bantu (East African) tribe, bury the seed lying naked on the ground. And the Indians of the Upper Negro River in north-western Brazil spray their semen on the fields amidst phallic dances, while simulating coitus. The furrow is identified with the vagina, the seed sown with the sperm or the phallus with the plough. In some East Asian languages, the word "jakó" means at the same time "jakó".

and an Assyrian prayer refers to a god "whose ploughshare has made the soil fertile". From very early on, the ploughman is also depicted with an erect limb and the plough itself as a phallus, and in Athens the custom is known of the last betrothal ceremony being performed on a plough: the man and the woman come together, according to the Attic marriage formula, to plough the couple's children. And in Herzegovina, when the winter seed sprouts, the silhouette of an erect penis with its scrotum is still ploughed on the field today, a fertility incantation once widespread in the Balkans ^[17].

Symbol of resurrection

Certainly, it would be wrong to interpret the cult of the phallus only from a priapic, naturalistic point of view, or even as a simple display of obscenity. Of course, the simple exaltation of the senses was connected with it, nothing more obvious or more natural; but it was also a religious expression. For primitive man, the vagina and the phallus, as bearers of engendering and reproductive capacity, are sacred, their most tangible powers in the face of death. This is exquisitely shown in the Indian legend of the god Shiva, bursting forth from the Linga (phallus) to beat Yama, god of the realm of the dead, to death and free his own worshipper. Shiva also materialises in the vulvas of seductive women.

In China, the cult of the phallus was intertwined with the veneration of fathers. The earliest Chinese script linked "earth" with "phallus" and the same sign meant "ancestor".

The Egyptian cross with the handle (*crux ansata*), equivalent to the letter T, with an oval handle at the top (originally the hieroglyphic sign 'ankh' life), a graphic combination of the male and female genitalia, was a symbol of life. It was carried by Osiris, a god of vegetation who ensured immortality, and by other gods, and later (under Christianity, which has turned everything upside down) was accepted by the Copts as a sign of the life-giving power of the cross of Christ. Even today

we can find this phallic symbol - which has been a sign of papal dignity since the 4th century and of archiepiscopal dignity since the 6th century - on the pallium on the chasuble of Catholic prelates, in which the entrance of the neck corresponds to the handle of the *crux ansata*.

But the cult of the phallus is also related to the belief in the . Thus, the great ithyphallic god Osiris holds up his penis or points to it, in statues and images, as a demonstration of his resurrection, a prototype of the resurrection of his worshippers. "O ye gods" reads an Egyptian inscription next to the figure of a dead man rising from the tomb, "ye who have sprung from the phallus, open your arms to me". And, of course, the member also figured in the tombs of Greece and Rome, as an image of the inexhaustible generative force of nature, victorious over death.

However, as a prototypical symbol of potency, the penis has played a central role in many religions.

Already in the anthropomorphic animal figures of the Ice Age paintings, the enormous sexual organ is repeatedly emphasised. In Palaeolithic times it often appears alongside female sexual characteristics, as a symbol for worship or as a fertilising medium with magical powers ^[18]. And, finally, there are a great many such emblems in the beliefs of many Eastern and Western peoples; sexual symbols are still repeated in rites, myths and tales.

Phallus worship in the Far East

In India, the people before the arrival of the Aryans are already called, in the sacred literature of the country, the "worshippers of the phallus". Indra, the main god of the Vedic religion, accompanied by the bull as a representation the genital capacity, has the testicles - of which, by the way, there are a thousand - of the most rambunctious of all animals, the goat. "Thou of prodigious strength" the Rigveda extols him, "make the man's sleeve (penis) swell". "Ye men of the penis, erect the penis, set it in frenzied activity, frolic after the booty, push it to the limit (or: make it ejaculate), the son of Nishtigri, Indra." And he himself, as a mighty hero

procreator, impregnates "the unwedded" - as they gurgle
"like springs gushing forth" - and "to the young women who fade away". [19]

In all temples of Shiva, a principal god of Hinduism, the Linga accompanies the Yoni as the most frequent and prominent form of Shiva. It is still one of the most revered idols in India, many people wear it around their necks as an amulet, we find it deified in houses and fields, and we can still see it on burial mounds as a symbol of rebirth, as was once done in Rome with the phallus. Since ancient times, the national shrine of Nepal has been a great Linga flanked by numerous temples. The Vedic-Brahmanic and Hindu religions are completely imbued with sexuality, and from them, the worship of the vagina and the phallus found a place even in Buddhism.

In Japanese Shintoism, which was full of ideas of fertility, there was until very recently a widespread penis cult, with large temples, fervent prayers and votive phalluses. And some African tribes still practise ritual intercourse [20].

The cult of the phallus in Egypt, Greece and Rome

In Egypt, where temple reliefs were decorated with the large sexual organs of the gods, the fertility god Min was presented ithyphallicly. Statues of Osiris as a three-penis animal were carried in procession, while women - who were long held in high esteem in that country - excitedly shook, by means of a rope mechanism, the image of the god, who displayed an enormous phallus. "There is no (Egyptian) temple," the third-century Bishop Hippolytus of Rome was horrified, "at the entrance of which the Hidden One is not shown naked, erect, crowned with all kinds of fruits of creation. It is found not only before the images of the holiest temples, but also (...) on every road and in every street and in every house as a barrier or a barrier of the Occult. cairn"[21].

In the temple of Hieropolis there was a whole frontispiece with enormous phalluses some fifteen metres high, the construction of which was attributed to Dionysos, the god who "has withstood Christianity longer than all the other Olympians and who still managed to light up the dark centuries with some of his joviality" ^[22].

In Greece, too, human genitalia enjoyed more or less ceremonial homage, and the phallus, as in India, became a religious symbol. It was extolled on vases and paintings, in song and dance. It was included in the costumes of the actors. Phallic processions were very common, taking place even at state festivals; satyrs and sylenes carried rigid male members in them as a symbol of a sacred cause.

In the mysteries of Aphrodite the penis also had a special significance, as in the cult of Athena, in the Arrephoria - an Attic festival in the month Scyrophorion (from May to June) - or in the Haloa.

-an Attic feast of orgiastic character dedicated to Demeter and Kore (and perhaps Dionysos) at the winter solstice.

As a specific idol of reproductive power and fertility, the popular Priapus was worshipped in Greece, Asia Minor and finally everywhere in the Roman Empire, who, in time, unified under his name a great number of other phallic gods, and was eternalised by the Roman poets in verses of obscene joviality. Son of Dionysus and Aphrodite, protector of gardens, fields and homes, his sacred animal was the proverbially lewd donkey. He was often found at the entrance to houses, as a propitiator of their fortune, and virgins and matrons, in order to become fertile, rode on his erect, huge, reddish member.

Hermes - according to some genealogies, progenitor (with Aphrodite) of Priapus - god of fertility, animals and fortune, patron of youth and of gymnasiums - in which men believed they could regenerate their potency when weakened - was also represented with an erect penis, the Herma, a piece of added wood or stone, decorated, anointed, kissed, and later - in Greece and Italy - used as an ornament of streets and gardens ^([23]).

In Rome the Liberalia, an ancient feast of the god Liber or Bacchus, which, at least in Lavinium, lasted a whole month and was of complete debauchery, was celebrated with pomp. During it, a gigantic phallus rode through the town and countryside in a lavish chariot and the most prominent matrons decorated the *membrum inhonestum*, as St. Augustine says, with wreaths of flowers before the whole town. On the feast of Venus in August, the ladies led the beloved member in festive procession from the Quirinal to the temple of Venus and deposited it in the lap of the goddess. The Roman people carried the phallus as a talisman; and their victorious generals had been hoisting the emblem before their chariots of triumph before it incorporated into the imperial cult.

In Uppsala, Freyr ("the lord"), Norse fertility demon, ruler of sun and rain, guardian of harvests, peace and joy, alongside Odin and Thor, boasted in his main temple of his huge "pleasure stake". And the strength of Thor himself - the most popular of the Germanic gods, for whom the goat was sacred - was indicated by his phallus.

In short, from India to Africa, from Egypt to the land of the Aztecs, many gods of procreation parade *penis erectus* in hand. And right up to contemporary times, genital objects of worship are venerated and celebrated in intimacy, cared for with melted butter and palm oil, or with fat that "anoints the balsam" [24].

St. Foutin

Even at some points in the Christian Middle Ages, albeit under repudiation and condemnation by the Church, wedding cakes were baked in the shape of male and female sexual organs, vessels and candles were made in the shape of erect members, ithyphallic holy images were venerated to which imitations of penises were offered. In France, quite a few saints appeared armed with a large member, and people attributed special powers to that of St. Photinus. Women sprinkled it with wine and then washed their genitals with it to stimulate their fertility.

St. Foutin or Futinus must have been the first bishop of Lyon, Faustinus, and his rise to sexual patron may be due to the alteration of his name into Foutin, reminiscent of the verb "foutre". From a similar root comes the old German word "futo" and the vulgar expression "Fotze".

In the 18th century one could still see the Santo Membro, a Priapus whose penis reached up to his chin, being paraded in the carnival procession at Triani in southern Italy. And at the same time the girls of upper Bavaria still carried a phallus-fetish on their country walks, which they embraced and kissed: the "St. Leonard's nail" ^[25].

CHAPTER 3 RITUAL SEXUAL RELATIONS

The sexual act fulfilled, on the one hand, the function of a sacrificial action by which the presence of the gods was invoked and revitalised; a second function was structurally identical to the Eucharistic: the sexual act was the way for the man to take part in the sacrum, which in this case was held and administered by the woman.

JULIUS EVOLA^[26]

In the third millennium all the most civilised countries knew about cohabitation in temples. The cult of the Great Mother and the mysteries of vegetation dedicated to her were the preferred time for orgies with ritual intercourse. By analogy, by virtue of a magical act (which sought to obtain something in exchange for something equal), the divinity had to make itself present and transmit its power, especially through women.

Defloration in the temple

At that time there was a widespread custom of premarital deflowering in the temple. No girl was allowed to marry without first undergoing the rite of deflowering. The representative of the god was then an ordinary man, who remained completely in the

anonymity. This circumstance was known in India as well as in some black tribes or in the Near East. In the area of the temple of Ishtar in Babylon, the girls waited in lines along the straight streets, until one of the men, after groping the ground, threw them some coins with the words "for the honour of the goddess" which obliged the chosen one to follow him and give herself to him. Herodotus, far more reliable than previously thought, stresses: "She has to go with the first one who throws something into her lap, and she can refuse no one. When she has thus slept with the man and done her duty to the goddess, she returns home, and not for a large sum would she lend herself to it again".

The sacred prostitutes

Of course, many others lent themselves to it at that time. Cohabitation in the temple, as the second most important form of sacred sexual intercourse (and without prejudice to a flourishing profane prostitution), was practised professionally by many women. Especially in Semitic and Asia Minor cities; according to Herodotus, in almost all peoples. The temple girls, called kadistu (sacred) in Babylon, were called hierodules (sacred maidens) in Greece, kadesh (consecrated) in Jerusalem or devadasis (servants of the divinity) in India. Described by the Portuguese as bayaderas (see Goethe's well-known ballad) and maligned by the moderns as mere prostitutes, originally, far from being despised, they were often considered above other women. Likewise, the daughters of nobles could ritually offer themselves for long periods without anyone disdaining to marry them afterwards. Even kings consecrated their daughters in sanctuaries and had them act as prostitutes during great festivities. The temple prostitutes - depicted in art in short dresses, dancing on tiptoe, arms raised - served as representatives and in a certain as emanations of the Great Mother and, by their devotion, enabled man to attain the *unio mystica*, the participation in the sacred, the more intimate, sensible and palpable communion with the divinity ^[27].

In the Poem of Gilgamesh - the oldest epic in world literature - Enkidu, at first a kind of grass-eating animal sharing a watering place with the beasts, is transformed into a human being by a consecrated prostitute. For six days and seven nights he is stripped of his animality in the arms of a representative of the mother goddess, and is in a sense reborn as a human being. Incidentally, the first Greek manuals on love life were mostly written by hetairas.

From Babylon - whose religion, without faith in the afterlife, was probably the first to incorporate consecrated prostitutes (protected by the Code of Hammurabi, the world's oldest legal compilation) - the custom passed to Syria, Phoenician country, Canaan, Asia Minor, Greece, Persia and southern India. Thousands of hierodules performed in the various temples; in Comana, the capital of Cappadocia, in the sanctuary of the goddess Ma (mother); in Pontus, in a temple surrounded by the river Iris, situated on steep rocks and dedicated to Anaitis, a Semitic goddess fused with the fertility goddess Ardisura; in the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth, to whose women, famous for their charms, Pindar dedicated one of his most beautiful odes. While more than two thousand years later a certain Ulrich Megerle of Messkirch (Baden), who adopted the name of Abraham to St. Clare as a barefoot Augustinian, cries out against "the women of Corinth" the

"madwomen" who, a thousand times a day, "offer themselves to mate with the fornicating stallions in honour of Venus and in her temple" and who "are so shameless" that to excite the "fornicating rogues, they approach with their heads uncovered, their faces unveiled, their eyes wide open, to show off their beautiful figure" (128).

Even in the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem there existed for some time a sacred brothel, of course vigorously opposed by the prophets. Religious prostitution must also have been practised among the Germans, in the cult of the fertility god Freyr. And in India - where, presumably, the cult of a mother goddess had been widespread since the third millennium and intercourse as a ritual means had long been known.

- sanctuaries with hundreds respected devadasis subsisted throughout the

first millennium AD; indeed, the custom has been preserved in some temples in southern India to this day⁽²⁹⁾.

Fallow deer

A third form of ancient ritual sexual intercourse - which is, incidentally, the origin of the hierodules - was the sacred wedding (*hieros gamos*), the most important of all ancient religious cults. It sought to increase potency, fertility and, in general, the well-being of the community through the ritual pairing of two people, in which the goddess was believed to be temporarily embodied in the chosen woman, like the Lord in the host in Catholicism.

Sacred betrothal was already celebrated among the Sumerians, probably the oldest of the great cultures. The priest-king consummated them with the high priestess on the feast of the new year, on the upper platform of the colossal stepped towers known by the Babylonian name of "ziggurat" (top, summit), models of the biblical tower of Babel. Herodotus admired and described a similar building in Babylon, about ninety metres high, consisting of eight superimposed towers, which could be climbed by means of an external spiral staircase. At the top of the building was a temple with a large, well-appointed dormitory used only by "a woman whom the god had chosen for himself from among the daughters of the land". This god "came to the temple and lay down there, as it seems was also the case in Thebes in Egypt, according to the opinion of the Egyptian priests". In Mesopotamia, where probably only those kings were deified whom the goddess ordered to share her bed, a feast was held after intercourse on the cushion adorned with plants and grass, to symbolise the generosity of Providence and make it effective.

The Iranian religion of the pre-Zoroastrian era also associated the festival with the
The New Year's Day was a wedding between gods that ended in sexual ecstasy. In Egypt, "the most beautiful feast of Opet", which represented the visit of Anion to his harem, probably culminated in the same way. In Ireland,

the Celts, whose women had a particularly prominent place in social life, followed the custom whereby the earth goddess conferred power on the king appointed by her. And the Germanic tribes, who celebrated fertility festivals from prehistoric times, were also familiar with hieras gamos, presumably including ceremonial copulations ^[30].

Nor should it be forgotten that pre-Christian Judaism, which had worshipped many foreign gods and practised religious prostitution, performed that rite every year in a riotous ceremony. The Semitic myth of the pairing of Baal and a temera - surely a manifestation of the mother goddess - also has, to our knowledge, hierogamic connotations. The Song of Songs itself, interpreted by Christians as an allegory of God's love for Israel (or of Christ for the Church, or of the Logos for Mary) and later recognised as an expression of a "profane" love lyric evidently has its The "vital location" in the hierogamic festival of some Palestinian god couple.

In India, sacred marriages were celebrated even later. Thus, King Harsa of Kashmir (around 989-1010), in order to prolong his life, ritually united himself with young slave-girls who were described as goddesses. And in modern times Hinduism retains the custom, as a high point of sacramental mysticism, in the cult of Sakti, an heiress of the ancient Great Mother. In the Sri-Cakra ("sublime wheel") ceremony, men and women, harlots and nuns, upper caste ladies and washerwomen, sit together in "magic circles" in a motley row, and the women, naked, covered only by ornaments, join the men after receiving the blessing. In Tantric Buddhism - which puts words like "women are the goddesses, they are the life" in Buddha's mouth - the master, behind a curtain, blesses with his phallus ("vajra": diamond) the girl, who must be beautiful and between twelve and sixteen years old, and then orders a young man to worship the consecrated one (called "vidya": wisdom) and mate with her.

Hieras gamos ceremonies have even been practised with animals, sacralised from the earliest times. Some became symbols or companions of the fertility gods. For example,

The horse and Freyr, the goat and Thor, the mare and the pig and Demeter, the sparrow and the dove and Aphrodite, the lion and the serpent and Magna Mater of Asia Minor appeared together. And the bull, the ultimate expression of genesic force, worshipped in Syria and Iran as early as 4000 BC, was the companion of the great goddess of the goddess. B.C., was the companion of the great oriental goddess of fertility; and not by chance, brought to Europe, from Asia to the West.

We encounter pairings of humans and (sacred) animals in stories and myths, but they are also attested historically. Herodotus reports of the goat of Mendes, called the

"Lord of the Young Girls" because the ladies united with him in order to beget "divine" children. Ovid also knows of the sacred goat that is said to have impregnated the sabines. The goat, the protagonist of Greek myths, the animal of worship of Aphrodite, Osiris and other gods, has always been attributed with great sexual activity. Dionysus preferred the form of a bull or goat to all others. Pan, a character shrouded in myth, as lascivious as he was powerful, the son of a shepherd and a goat, elevated to the status of god of Nature by the Orphics and the Stoics, always appears with the horns, ears and feet of a goat. (In the Old Testament the goat became the "scapegoat" sent into the wilderness, "the Devil" burdened with all the crimes of the people; in the New Testament, it is the symbol of the damned at the Last Judgement; in the Christian Middle Ages, the stinking Satan in person) ^[31].

Promiscuity with the horse

Among the Celts, whose rulers obtained their dignity by marriage to a mother goddess, there was a rite of *hiras gamos* with a horse. The future king had sexual intercourse with a mare. The motif was also included in the Roman *equus october*, in the North Germanic Volsi myth, and above all in the Indian *asva-medha* (literally, "horse sacrifice"; the crossing with the horse)... probably the most remarkable sacrifice in the world.

After a year's preparation, the act began with the strangling of a carefully bred and gaited horse, which was covered with a blanket under which the king's leading lady slipped to take the animal's member into her bosom. Then followed openly lubricious words and a "verbal intercourse" took place. Thus the priest of Adhvaryu says to the horse: "Drop your seed into the channel of her who has opened her thighs! Set the lubricator in motion, O invigorated one of man, he who is a thousand lives in woman! (...)". And the Mahishi: "Mama, Mamita, Mamíta. Nobody fucks me! The one responsible for the sacrifice, her husband: "hold her and open her (vulva), as one plants a hacina stick in the bush (...)". The Adhvaryu to the princess: "The poor little bird is swaying and snaking. The battering ram bursts into the deep crevice. Eagerly the vagina devours it". The Mahishi: "Mummy, Mummy, Mummy! Nobody (...)" and so on. And the priest of Hotar says to the scorned wife: "If the big thing (the penis) shakes the little thing in your cleft (i.e., the clitoris of your vagina), the two big labia will flutter like two little fishes in the puddle left by a cow's footprint". The Mahishi: "Mama, Mamita, Mamíta (...)".

The "horse sacrifice" of ancient India was supposed to stimulate the This may have been the reason why the four priests were presented by the ruler not only with the retinue of four hundred beauties accompanying the four wives participating in the sacrifice, but even with these same four women who, according to an older custom, were probably offered to the people.

Subsequently, in many cases the rite of hierogamy was only performed symbolically. In Greece, where there were countless such traditions, the annual celebration of the marriage between Zeus and Hera as hieras gamos was prominent. The same was true at Eleusis for the union of Zeus and Demeter, whose sacred image was the female sexual organ. "The Exalted One has given birth to a sacred child" announced the hierophant. And the initiates murmured: "I have slipped into the bridal bed". Or: "I have entered the womb of the queen of hell". In the cult of Sabasius they put a snake between the breasts of the initiates and pulled it out from underneath ^[32].

Collective sacred orgies

Originally, however, sacred betrothals were followed by collective copulations, as during the great vegetation festivals in the cult of Ishtar, where first the king copulated with the high priestess before the eyes of all the people, and then the assembled were paired more or less at random. "One did not choose as a partner the being one loved because he was beautiful, young, strong, intelligent, virile, powerful or attractive in some other way. Old and young, beautiful and ugly, man and animal, father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister, man and man, woman and woman, child and child... all were offered and copulated collectively, before the eyes of all". Such promiscuity was orgy in its original sense, sacrifice, worship of the god. The Christian world has since perverted that meaning, making it diabolical; the orgy, once the most sacred rite of the ancient religions, was transformed into an idea that included all kinds of demonic interventions, witch flights, black masses and the like.

Nevertheless, the *sacrum sexuelle* survived even in Christianity; there continued to be currents, considered heretical by the Church, which venerated completely different traditions and also saw God at work in sexuality, which accepted neither the ascetic mania nor the Catholic concept of sin: Amalricians, Beghards or "Brethren of the Free Spirit".

Already in antiquity, in addition to the mystical-symbolic rite, the actual rite of erotic union took place in certain Gnostic Christian circles. In the seminal cult of the Fibionites, married couples, after intercourse, tasted the sperm as a communion. And the Carpocratians came to the community of women through the rejection of marriage. Clement of Alexandria, one of the Fathers of the Church, laments the situation: "A baneful custom reigns among the Carpocratians, for as soon as there is a banquet, men and women must excite their appetites, then put out the lights and mate as they please. They call this satisfaction of the spirit" ^[33].

"Black masses

In the Middle Ages, remnants of ancient ecstatic cults also survived and a variety of sexual practices took place, often culminating in collective deflowering and mating, with coitus as the goal, "as in a sacrament"; it is significant that many of these ceremonies took place among the ruins of pagan temples or other vestiges of antiquity. Under the foundations of Notre-Dame de Paris an altar was discovered (consecrated to Cernunus, a horned divinity) on which "black masses" were celebrated. And in any case, it is worth retaining that the participants in these ceremonies were also strongly penetrated by their meaning, and were so convinced that, by these procedures, they had assured themselves of immortality, that they died without fear or remorse. The young women praised such orgies, nourished by archaic substrata and life itself, as "the noblest of religions", a source of indescribable delights and ecstasies, and "faced death with the same calm composure as the early Christians". The alleged formula of a cult attested in Slavonia up to the 12th century reads: "Today we rejoice that Christ is vanquished".

There continued to be Christians who found ideas about the sinfulness of sexuality absurd. For example, in the 18th century, the young abbess of the Dominican convent of St Catherine of Prato acknowledged during a trial that "since our spirit is free, it is only the intention that makes an action evil. So it is enough to elevate oneself spiritually to God for nothing to be a sin". The young woman equated mystical ecstasy with the copulation of lovers and discovered eternal life and paradise, in this world, in the "transubstantiation of the union of man and woman". We enjoy God through the act, "through the cooperation of man and woman" through "the man in whom I recognise God". And he concluded: "The activity which we mistakenly call impure is the true purity; it is the purity which God commands us and which we, by his will, must practise; without it there is no way to find God, who is the Truth".

Likewise, certain secret currents of the Kabbalah cultivated sexual magic. Jacob Frank (1712-1791), founder of the sect of the Zoharists or Contratalmudists, did not interpret the coming of the Messiah, the Salvation, from a historical perspective, but resorted to a symbolic and orgiastic-sexual point of view, through the inner awakening of each human being, through intimate communication with a woman. "I tell you that all the Jews are in great distress because they are awaiting the coming of the Saviour and not the coming of young woman".

Frank saw in the young woman "a door to God" ^[34].

Why abstinence instead of pleasure?

It is true that long before Christianity there had already appeared increasingly influential enemies not only of sexuality, as the centre of many ancient religions, but also of the worship of mother goddesses and women. Forces arose - and certainly always under the religious aegis - that fought one or the other or both at the same time. The war between the sexes and against sexuality in general began.

How was this transformation, even this perversion of the natural functions of life possible? How could human beings, so desirous of joy, of pleasure, repress that which they preferred above all things?

How could he indulge in asceticism, in a morality that seeks to expel the instincts, in enterprises of self-dilaceration and sinister penitential chastity, how could he attach the stigma of sin to everything and renounce what made him happy?

Primitive man - like the Christian believer of today - did not then renounce out of altruism, out of nobility of soul, but in order to obtain something in return, to demand, in a certain sense to take something from Nature or the gods, that is, to bargain for something by means of a *sacrifice*. And the greater the sacrifice, the more painful it was, the more effective it seemed to be. Thus, man progressively renounced even his sexual life, mortified himself for the harvest, for fishing, for abundant hunting, kept continence before a fight or a long journey... but always out of greed, for the sake of greed, for simple

selfishness, to control one thing, to avoid another, to bargain for services in exchange for services; triumph of fear, craving, envy, expression that selfish principle which the Indians enunciated as "dehi me dadami te" and the Romans, "do ut des" which is still decisive when the devotee, with a feeling of religious satisfaction and self-indulgence, makes a vow or a pilgrimage, when he fasts or torments himself, or whenever he

"does penance" in order to obtain something: success, health, eternal life.

In any case, it was in this context that the "clerical" type emerged, who tried to use the protective and fearful instincts of these men to his own advantage, intensifying their fear and insecurity, shaking their confidence in existence even more, precisely so that he could then offer his services, his anaesthetics and narcotics, his hopes, his salvation.

Sometimes, such "liberators", "saviours" or "redeemers" may even have been physiologically weak, handicapped, constitutionally malfunctioning people who made their own vital impediments their strength, their need a virtue, protagonists of ambitious attempts, not only to participate unrestrictedly in life, but even to control it through their claims on the lives of others, including the healthy whom they envied, and whom they grouped around them, holding them together with the weak, retaining them with the weak, and even with the healthy whom they envied, but even to control it through their claims on the lives of others, including that of the healthy whom they envied and whom they grouped around them, keeping them together with the weak, poisoning, embittering and exhausting them for so long that they became ill and needed the help of precisely those who had made them ill.

Thus, concepts such as "sin", "corruption" or "corruption" were able to emerge and grow.

"In it the attempt has been made to use force to obstruct the sources of force; in it, the glassy, crafty gaze is directed against physiological prosperity itself, especially against its expression: beauty, joy; meanwhile, satisfaction is felt and sought in failure, in atrophy, in pain, in accident, in ugliness, in gratuitous suffering, in alienation, in self-flagellation, in self-immolation (...). They lurk among us as living reproaches, as warnings... as if health, success, strength, strength, the

pride, the feeling of power were in themselves vicious things that one day would have to be atoned for... and bitterly atoned for: deep down, how willing they are to make them pay! how eager to be, in this way, executioners!"^[35]

This tendency which has eclipsed whole millennia, directed against Nature and against this world, without nuance, this tendency which, of course, is a typical reactionary image, developed also, and to no small extent, in those two religious and cultural circles which later to exert most influence on Christianity: monotheistic Judaism and the Hellenistic mysteries.

BOOK ONE

THE RISE OF ASCETICISM

The preaching of chastity is an incitement to the unnatural. Any belittling of sexual life, any defiling of it through the concept of the "impure" is the real sin against the sacred spirit of life.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

CHAPTER 4

CULTIC CHASTITY AND CONTEMPT FOR WOMEN IN MONOTHEISTIC JUDAISM

The biblical creation myth begins where the Babylonian myth ends... Contrary to the facts, man is not born from woman, but woman is created from man.

ERICH FROMM^[36]

The first pages of the Bible have served as a persistent foundation (...) for the awareness of the physical and moral superiority of man over woman, who is impure per se and who from the beginning personified sin.

JOHANN AND AUGUSTIN THEINER,
Catholic theologians^[37]

Women are equated in certain religious references to deformed, deaf and dumb, imbeciles, slaves, hermaphrodites and the like (...) Any man is allowed to sell his daughter as a slave.

ERICH BROCK^[38]

The religion of ancient Israel was not yet the supernatural monotheism of the post-exilic era, but polytheistic and polydemonic, like that of all other Semites. Nor is there any evidence that the Israelites believed in the

resurrection of the dead, an idea that may have appeared under Persian influence; probably the earliest document of it is the so-called Apocalypse of Isaiah, in which the return to life happened thanks to the dew, reminiscent of certain ideas of the Canaanite fertility religion.

The god of the big member

Apart from Yahweh, who was apparently discovered by Moses in the worship of his father-in-law Jethro, the so-called Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - regarded by Christian tradition as the pillars of monotheism - worshipped, among others, the Semitic god El, at the top of the Canaanite pantheon, whose name means "the true god" and whose title, "the bull", expresses his irresistible potency, for he seduces women by the size of his virile member. In pre-davidic Jerusalem he is worshipped as a superior god; in many passages in the earliest part of the Old Testament, he is called "The Supreme" or "Creator of Heaven and Earth" (*qoneh samayim wa'ares*): the earliest evidence of creationist faith in the Bible! Later Yahweh was easily identified with Him, although the pagan god then brought some positive features to the Israelite image of God. But the cult of ancient Judaism did not only include El, god of the great member, creator of the World; sacred stones were also worshipped, a practice that was widespread throughout the Earth and whose derivations still reach into our century. Sacred stones were also associated with sexual life, and for a long time men considered them to be animated beings, charged with power and bearers fertility. The menhirs, scattered over the different continents, often in the form of or adorned with phalluses, also have, at least partially, genital meaning.

Especially in the Canaanite religion, sacred stones (about the size of today's graves) were used as cairns or betilos (Hebr. "massebah"). If the pillars and pillars of Asherah were signs of the mother goddess of fertility, the stones symbolized the

male god, and perhaps there were some in the Ark of the Covenant itself. In any case, the patriarch Jacob, sleeping, according to the Bible, on a stone and then blessed with four wives, to whom God made so many promises in the dream - and not only to him, but also to his repeatedly mentioned "seed" - recognises that the stone is Bethel, "the house of God" (El!).

"How holy" exclaims the pious personage, "is this place: here truly are the House of God and the Gates of Heaven" (which later became the introit of the Roman Christmas liturgy). And he lifts up the stone as a "sign" and sprinkles it with oil. Jacob again constructs this kind of phallic emblem in two later biblical passages which again tell us of his seed, his sons and his sons' sons, emblems which will take on ever more beautiful and valuable forms and which, incidentally, will be forbidden in Deuteronomy, condemned by the prophets and finally destroyed in the year 620, under the reign of Josiah, along with many other survivals of pagan worship. Nevertheless, today there are still numerous betilos in Palestine and its neighbouring countries, the Arabs still anoint the sacred stones with oil, the primitive people dance around them with their penis in their hands, believing in their generative power, or rub their sexual parts and breasts on them, in order to conceive a child or to preserve their milk.

The Israelites, who were circumcised and swore by the phallus, knew, obviously, the phallic cult. We have certain phallic-looking betilos; Isaiah mentions a priapic household god; Ezekiel, male images of gold and silver with which lust is unleashed; in Jeremiah, the Israelites say of the stone: "thou hast begotten us"; and in Ecclesiastes "throwing stones" is mentioned together with "embracing" with the meaning of making children. The Christian Middle Ages still know the *petra genetrix*, the mother stone of procreation, the *lapides vivi* or animated stone, according to an inscription in the cathedral of Aachen. And Mechthild of Magdeburg (*infra*), the lover of Christ, instinctively apostrophises her Betrothed: "Thou eminent rock" ([39]).

The cult of trees

But these venerable patriarchs did not only pay homage to gods and phallic worship. The Old Testament also reveals traces of their worship of trees. The tree, an eternal symbol in the myths of the peoples, was for a long time a sign of the life force and a symbol of genital qualities. It was often seen as a woman or a man, or even as androgynous and the place of origin of children, as animated divinity. And precisely in the religion of Canaan and in deforested Palestine it was the specific symbol of fertility. The inhabitants of ancient Canaan - where the arboreal demons were called 'el or 'elon - built "under the green trees" from sacred stones and poles, and also "under the green trees" they celebrated fertility festivals. And so the patriarch Abraham himself plants a taray bush (in Beer-Sheba) and invokes there the famous "El an 'adonach 'el 'olam". (The tolerant patriarch even leaves his own wife there abandoned in the harem of a prince).

Later Christian synods became more and more suspicious of this lasting divinisation of trees, tabernacles, fountains and rocks, and, as in 692, at the synod of Toledo, they punished the credulous for it: "if eminent persons, with three pounds of gold, if needy, with a hundred lashes"; or as at the synod of Paderborn, in 785: "the nobleman with sixty, the freeman with thirty, and the litus with fifteen solidi. If he cannot pay the fine, he is to remain a servant in the church until the sum is paid" ^[40].

Yahweh: "Tear down their altars".

Yahweh, who had originally been a nature spirit, a volcanic, storm or storm god who, as has been pointed out, had hardly any female features or priestesses, in the course of time got rid of all his competitors in Israel. He was the only god of the Ancient World who had himself worshipped without images; all religious enthusiasm of

The agrarian character was considered demonic and the once sacred sphere of the cosmic was subject to a demystification with serious consequences.

The Israelites, who probably occupied parts of Palestine in the 13th century and quickly mixed with the Hebrews - who were related to them but had settled there earlier - soon waged wars of conquest and annihilation throughout its confines, as Yahweh had commanded: "Break down their altars and destroy their idols, set fire to their forests and reduce their gods to rubble". Accordingly, and serving as an example for a long tradition of Christianity, there were slaughters of Moabites and Ammonites, Philistines, Midianites and Arameans; especially frequent were the clashes with the Canaanites - also called "Amorites" or "Hittites" by the Old Testament, which characterises them as completely corrupted.

-those who were content to impose exile or tax burdens ^[41].

Baal and Asherah

In Canaan, however, where the nomadic or semi-nomadic Israelites came into contact with an ancient cultural universe, with the Great Mother, the gods El and Baal, sacred betrothal, ritual prostitution and defilement, in a word, with a religion of magnificent feasts and sensual stimuli, assimilations of all kinds finally took place. For if it is true that these had already begun in the time of the Patriarchs, at first they only concerned the rustic worship of Yahweh, in the open field, where, amidst immoderate libations and collective copulations on the earth, the Asherah trees, called by the very name of the goddess, were planted.

Gradually, however, syncretism also took hold in the central sanctuaries of the kingdom. Thus Solomon (ca. 965-928), in addition to erecting temples to foreign gods, endowed the temple of Yahweh - built according to Phoenician models by a Canaanite architect - with many symbols of fertility worship (lilies, lions, bulls)... Of course, the royal heart, finally "seduced" by his foreign wife, "ceased to belong entirely to the Lord". And his successor Jeroboam I (928-907) kept this tradition and

represented Yahweh, in the new Yahwist temples at Bethel and Dan, as an invisible figure on a golden calf (the "golden calves" of the Bible), just as the Canaanites pictured their supreme god Baal on a bull.

Baal was increasingly worshipped, but also the Great Mother Goddess, of whom numerous statues, mostly nude, have been found in Palestine. Later, King Manasseh consecrated an Asherah in her honour in the Jerusalem temple, and in Jeremiah's time women still baked cakes for her. There was even ceremonial prostitution. In Shiloh the sons of Yahweh's priest slept "with the women who served at the entrance to the holy place"; many others "sacrifice with the consecrated hetairahs"; "father and son meet with the prostitute (...), they lie on the clothes pawned by the altar". Jeremiah also laments the comings and goings of the Jerusalemites to the kadesh.

Elijah (who had four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal imprisoned and killed) and Elyseus in the ninth century, Amos, Hosea and Isaiah in the eighth century, do not fail to condemn the worship of different Baals, and also that of Asherah, although often they do not even know exactly which religious custom is Canaanite and which is originally Israelite. And, in short, the biblical polemic itself is full of resonances from the Canaanite literary heritage, so that it ends up depending, linguistically, on what it is fighting against.

Again and again Yahweh commands: "You must destroy their altars, break down their images and cut down their forests"; again and again he forbids cohabitation with those who "spread harlotry with their gods". Again and again the prophets thunder. Hosea - who was deceived by his own wife Gomer (bought for fifteen shekels of silver and a measure and a half of barley) during the Canaanite fertility rites, which presumably pushed him more than anything else into the prophetic vocation - roars, in prose and verse, against the spirit of lust, against "the days of the Baals, when she sacrificed to them and adorned herself with ring and necklace and pursued her lovers, forgetting me, thus spoke Yahweh (!)". (The prophet called for "the spirit of lust", and "the spirit of the Baals, when she sacrificed to them and adorned herself with ring and necklace and pursued her lovers, forgetting me, thus spoke Yahweh (!).)" (The prophet called a daughter conceived with Gomer

"Not pitied" and to a son "Not my people"). Isaiah becomes heated when

speaks of "the offspring of the adulterer and the prostitute, conceived among the terebinths, under every leafy tree". "On a high and steep mountain you have prepared your bed (...) you have spread your blankets on the bed and sold yourself to those of your preferred suitors". Ezekiel, with a strength symbolic and metaphorical almost unmatched, gives account of

"The daughters of Israel played the harlot with the Assyrians, with the Babylonians, with the Egyptians, "whose members were as the members of donkeys, and their ejaculation as the ejaculation of stallions". And also the children of Israel, Jeremiah exclaims, have become "adulterers". "Guests of brothels, they have turned into well-fed and rambunctious stallions, each one neighing after the nearest woman".

Benedict was not wrong when he forbade his monks to read the Heptateuch (the five books of Moses, the book of Joshua and the book of Judges) at night. "There are other times to read them" he opined... with some levity ^[42].

Death to the adulterer and lewd animals

And all this, to a large extent, was written out of love for chastity! In any case, at the beginning of the Bible, sexuality is stigmatised, it appears as an evil, and the catastrophe begins with the horrible relationship between Adam and Eve, until Yahweh loses patience and humanity, except for Noah's family. While the terrible sin is repeated, the admonitions, which are a characteristic of Jewish morality, are not interrupted. Lust becomes the greatest of vices. The so-called sexual decalogue repeatedly curses lust, and even in an ancient tradition of the Seventy the prohibition of adultery in the Decalogue precedes that of murder! And if adultery is punished in the Bible with the death penalty, so are incestuous relations, homosexuality and sexual intercourse with animals, where even vicious beasts are to be executed. On this there were a lot of cultic precepts of purification. That is, everything that had to do with sexual functions (pregnancy, menstruation, childbirth) was impure.

("lick") and transmitted that impurity, as could leprosy and everything connected with death. "If a man lies with a woman and there is ejaculation, they both have to bathe in water; they are unclean until the night". Simple pollution stains. "If a man has an ejaculation, let him wash his whole body, he is unclean until evening." Inevitably, everything that has had to do with the unclean (bed, seat, garment, person) becomes unclean. And, of course, the unclean one is removed from the sanctuary until he has purified himself by offering or sacrifice: this is the main thing!

Especially in worship, it was obligatory to conceal "shame", an aspect that had already been decisive since Adam and Eve. The priests were only allowed to walk around in the temple dressed in breeches, so as not to violate the sacred ground, "lest they have to bear the guilt and die". And a woman who grabbed a man by his sexual parts in a fight had to have her hand cut off.

"You must not know compassion" exhorts the word of God ^[43].

Women seduce, not men

The Jews had rather little compassion for women, which had as little impact on Christianity as religious chastity.

In the Creation story, i.e. from the very beginning, the Bible shows the dependence of woman on man and her guilt: the true meaning of history. The woman is the seducer, the man the seduced; excused and exonerated from the beginning. The whole myth looks for excuses for her, as it were. It is not his penis that tempts the woman, but, as is easy to infer, the penis is objectified in the serpent, the ancient phallic symbol, and the serpent tempts and convinces the woman who, in turn, entangles the man. Adam defends himself before Yahweh: "The woman you gave me, she gave me of the fruit and I ate"; and then Yahweh condemns Eve to give birth in pain and to serve the man: "He will be your master". The Jewish story of the fall through sin has several parallels: in Sumerian or Buddhist myth. And just as in the Bible, in Germanic mythology there is also a first human couple, Aske and Embla; but their union is never judged as sin!

The struggle of the cult of Yahweh against the feminine divinities and their religions had to turn also against the guiding principle of these divinities, the feminine condition, by removing women from public life. If she had previously been sanctified, she now became impure, oppressed and despised.

In the Old Testament, the name of the husband, "ba'al" already marks him as the owner and lord of the wife ("b'eulah"). Leviticus equates the woman with domestic animals and in Jesus' time she is still on the same level as the child and the servant. Certainly, in the 20th century, people still prayed in the synagogue: "I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast not made me an unbeliever, nor a servant (...), nor a wife".

In the Jewish mass, as later in Catholicism, women were rigorously neglected. They were excluded from any active participation. Prayer, reading, preaching were men's tasks. She was forbidden to study the Torah, even though it was considered necessary for salvation, and was relegated in the temple to the vestibule. Even the sacrificed animals had to be male! The Jews also knew that God hardly ever talks to women, that the first sin came through a woman and that we all have to die for her sake; and they go so far as to say that "the fault of man is better than the virtue of woman".

In everyday life, too, women were discredited. To talk to her more than was strictly necessary or to be guided by her advice was punishable by the penalties of hell; women were not greeted, nor were they allowed to greet other people. Their lives were worth less; the birth of a boy caused rejoicing, that of a girl was endured. The Old Testament ignores daughters in the treatment of inheritance; they could even be sold as slaves ^[44].

Polygamy and aversion to virginity

The Book of Books continued to tolerate polygamy, concubinage with female slaves and prisoners of war, sexual intercourse with prostitutes and unmarried women.

who were not already in paternal custody and separation (for the Babylonians and Egyptians, the woman also had the right to separate); and as soon as the sons reached puberty, the father could give them a slave for "betrothal". On the other hand, any extramarital affair of a married woman was punishable by death.

Polygamy, which at some points took on considerable dimensions - Rehoboam had eighteen wives and sixty concubines; the sage Solomon, supposed author of several books of the Holy Writ, had seven hundred wives, plus three hundred concubines - was not opposed by the prophets and was authorised until the ninth century AD. The Talmudists explicitly formulated the rule that no Jew could have more than four wives at a time and the king, at most, eighteen. It is true neither the Bible nor the Talmud (repeatedly condemned to the stake by the Church) permitted the mistreatment of women; medieval Christian law, which insisted on monogamy, did so for the first time.

Nor was there among the Jews a defamation of marriage or an ideal of virginity or celibacy. Levites and priests were to marry, though only to honoured virgins of Israel. Commitment prior to marriage was called "kiddushin" (incarnation) and singleness was regarded as a disgrace, a punishment from God. This is why OT Hebrew does not have a single word for unmarried, because the idea was completely unheard of. In post-exilic times, parents were formally urged to marry off their children as early as possible: girls at fifteen and young men at eighteen. Sterility was also considered a reproach; hence Lot gave away his own daughters.

And in the New Testament Mary speaks of the "humility" of her virginity! It was dreamed that in the time of the Messiah women would give birth daily. Later, the Talmud itself - and, incidentally, also the Koran, which values marriage with the same emphasis - obliged marriage and, unlike the non-spiritual man, the rabbi was to "lie with his wife every night, to keep his brain clean for his studies".

Neither the undervaluing of women nor the abundant purification prescriptions led to tendencies among the Jews

ascetics, with the exception of marginal sectarians such as the Rechabites, the Therapeutae and the Essenes ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾.

In contrast, in the Hellenistic world, asceticism played an increasingly important role.

CHAPTER 5

ASCETICISM IN THE MYSTIC CULTS OF THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

The self-confidence of the ancient Helade is broken here; the devotee seems to be helpless in his search for external help; he needs the manifestations and mediations of "Orpheus the Sovereign" to find the way to salvation.

ERWIN ROHDE^[46]

At first and for quite some time, Greece remained faithful to the religion of Hornero, paying tribute to the affirmation of the world and the joy of existence in the face of religious fear and any form of spiritualistic faith. Life proper was, for the Greeks, bodily, physiological, sensual life; the soul alone was an unreal shadow in Hades.

In the course of time, however, a decided change of heart took place. The Greeks replaced joy and love with mortification, discontent and renunciation; they subjected their bodies to fasts, they proscribed the Hereafter in favour of the Hereafter. The horizon was transformed and the first symptoms of the madness of the following millennia dawned. A pessimistic mood arose, the polarity of guilt and atonement, the bad conscience, that "dreadful beast" according to Luther, or, in the words of Nietzsche, that "green eye announced by a specimen too good" for this world, a specimen for whom, evidently, everything around him was "the better" the "viler".

was. A profoundly desolate type appeared, fundamentally denying, but acting as a self-sacrificing benefactor, a saviour and redeemer, something charitably pierced, subtly treacherous. And, at the same time, the sexual relationship with women began to be devalued, and their social status continued to decline.

On happiness in mortification

Hornero already knows the selloi, the divinatory priests of Zeus at Dodona, "who do not wash their feet and sleep on the ground". Since the VIII to VI millenarian prophets, sectarians calling for repentance, called Bacchides - Abaris, Aristeas or the best known, Epimenides - preach the bodily mortification as a means to to favour the soul and strengthen the spirit ^[47].

However, all this remained in the background until the 5th century. Scorned by the educated and excluded from official worship, it had little influence on Greek life at the height of its cultural splendour.

It was after the misfortunes of the Peloponnesian War that the preachers of repentance, belligerent against all things sexual, flourished, with all kinds of secret ascetic cults, dark mysteries and rigorist philosophies that condemned the body on account of the soul.

In the 6th century, Greece's first salvific religion emerged: Orphism. It was attributed to Orpheus, the mythical singer, and produced countless "sacred writings". Whoever lives by them, they said, will survive among the blessed; whoever is obstinate will meet a terrible fate after death. According to Orphic beliefs, the soul is in the body as a prisoner, like the corpse in the grave. It returns to earth in constantly renewed human and animal forms, until its final release through the negation of the body, through asceticism. So the Orphics, who called themselves the "Pure Ones" and already practised a kind of "indulgences" (magical formulas to free the living and the dead from the sorrows of the) and something like masses for the dead,

They avoided meat, eggs, pulses and wool in their clothing, although they did not rely on their own strength, but on divine mercy and salvation.

Orphism probably depends on the - in many respects analogous - doctrine of Pythagoras (ca. 580-510), who, even during his lifetime, enjoyed an almost divinising veneration: he cured diseases of body and soul, calmed a storm at sea, suffered mockery and persecution, descended into hell and finally rose from the dead, anticipating many of the elements of the New Testament. Pythagoras also demeans the woman. "There is a good principle," he says, "which has created order, light and man, and an evil principle which has created chaos, darkness and woman".

Influenced by the Pythagorean doctrine of the soul. Plato admitted the use of myths as pious lies and eventually gave himself over to an increasingly nebulous mysticism and morality, to the point that, in his last writing, he wanted to see the stubbornly impious dead. Likewise, for Plato - who in his *Politics* preaches a crude body/soul opposition, but also the community of women - the body is a prison, the soul's evil neighbour, the devil's pleasure; salvation is not in this world, but in the next, whereby Plato became the worst contradictor of Hornero, the

"Moses in the Greek language" according to Clement of Alexandria or, according to Nietzsche, the "do-gooder of the Beyond", the "great slanderer of life".

"the greatest calamity in Europe". His ideas - recognisable in the sexual pessimism of the Stoics and the Neoplatonists, enemies of the body and of life

- have left their mark on the West and Christianity to this day ^[48].

Purification and whitening of souls in antiquity

As in Judaism, the Hellenistic world was also familiar with cultic chastity, which later, in Catholicism, led to celibacy. A fault-finding mania, which raged among many peoples and stemmed from fear of the dreaded forces of taboo and the omnipresent threat of demonic infection, served as the basis for a concept of

impurity which at first was not moral, but only ritual. Anything to do with death, birth or sexual relations was considered "impure" as it was infested by evil spirits. Ritual purification was required of any person or object that was impure: not only the murderer or murderer, his clothes and dwelling, as well as connected with him, but also the birthing woman and anyone who touched her, the one who had an abortion or participated in a birth, the newborn child, the house in which it was delivered, anyone who attended a burial or stood by a grave, and so on. As happened later in early Christianity, in view of so many and such fears, running water was used, but also mud, bran, figs, wool, eggs, blood of animals or puppies of pedigree dogs; all these things disinfected, purged, absorbed, all of them purified and scrubbed until the religious cleansing was complete, in a word, until the individual was made an almost "new" person.

In the beginning, sin was also conceived as material dirt.

- in many languages the same word means sin and dirt - and since it was believed that when the body was defiled, the soul was also defiled, in order to cleanse the soul, to "purify" and "whiten" it, it was necessary to proceed first to bodily cleanliness by mortification. The primitive cultic imperfection had been transformed into moral imperfection, and finally into sin.

The Greek mysteries, which promised a blessed life after death, had particularly emphasised the ideas of purification. No one "with blemish" could enter the temple. Everyone had to be *katharos*, sprinkling themselves with water at the entrance and, if necessary, offering a purificatory victim or, as in the temple of Isis, avoiding the consumption of meat and wine.

Fasting had mainly a reinforcement function. Thus, some visitors to the temple were not allowed to eat pork or salted meat or, in some cases, any meat at all, while elsewhere fish or intoxicating drinks were forbidden. On 24 March, the day of the death of the god Attis (who was resurrected on the 26th: the third day), it was forbidden to eat anything made of seeds. The initiates of Eleusis - among whom were Sulla, Cicero, Augustus, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius

-They had to abstain from certain dishes during the feast, and on vespers they had to fast for a whole day, after which they drank the sacred drink made of barley flour: undoubtedly, one can speak of a sacrament ^([49]).

Prelude to celibacy

But first and foremost, dealing with the gods presupposed sexual abstinence; anyone who had had an intimate relationship, including laymen, was disqualified from worship. According to Demosthenes, before visiting the temple or coming into contact with sacred objects, continence had to be observed "for a certain number of days". Tibullus (born around 50 BC) also sings:

*"Far from the altar I call to stay the one who enjoyed amorous
pleasure the night before".*

Similarly, Plutarch (born about a hundred years later) warns against visiting the temple and making offerings after sexual contact. At least they should "spend the night and sleep". However, the time limits for continence fluctuate up to ten days. At first, the simple fact of sexual intercourse was the only thing that counted. It was only later that the sin began to be taxed. Thus, an inscription in the temple of Pergamon required one day of purification if the couple was married, and two in the case of extramarital relations. On the Attic feast of the Thesmophoria, "generative women" attending religious worship were required to abstain for the three preceding days; nine days on the corresponding Cypriot feast.

However, the obligation to avoid macula and *copula carnalis* was particularly serious in the case of the priest. He was closest to the gods and, as such, was also more exposed than anyone else to demons; it was during coitus that he was threatened by the evil spirits, who chose this moment to penetrate the woman and go to their destination, preferably through the orifices of the body.

Thus, many cults were entrusted to virgins: those of Hera, Artemis, Athena, and also those of Dionysus, Herakles, Poseidon, Zeus and Apollo. Of course, they were also humanitarian and, since they demanded sexual abstinence, they chose people for whom it was less painful: older women - who were also free of menstruation, which made them unfit for worship - or the elderly (as in the temple of Herakles at Phocis). In Plato's *Laws*, priests had to be over sixty years old. Sometimes even children of either sex were used, though usually only until the onset of puberty. Of course, some priests were obliged to remain chaste for life: this was the in a temple in Thespia, or in the temple of Artemis in Orcomenos.

In Rome, where, moreover, asceticism was not even positively valued, the *virgines sacrae* (six, in historical times) had to keep a strict abstinence. Revered but reduced to a kind of enclosure, they had to guard the fire of the goddess for at least thirty years, although they sometimes extended their services voluntarily for some time. Clad in the ancient Roman wedding dress, they acted as wives of the *pontifex maximus*, who originally also appointed them, although later it was agreed to draw lots for the selection from among twenty girls appointed by him. Apart from this *pontifex*, no man was allowed to set foot in the temple of Vesta. Nevertheless, a secret sexual relationship with the "god", let alone tribadism, could not be ruled out. If a vestal violated chastity, she was walled up alive - which happened about a dozen times - in the *canyus sceleratus* (a tiny corner underground, with a bed, a light, some water, oil and wine), while the defiler was flogged to death. (Mexican priestesses and Peruvian sun virgins were also executed if they violated the vow of virginity) ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Cultic castration

The most radical form of sexual restraint corresponded to the priests of Cybele, who ritually castrated themselves with a piece of glass, as Juvenal says, , as we read in Ovid, with a stone.

sharp: this was attributed to the antiquity of the custom. The severed limb was offered to the divinity; perhaps originally, perhaps, to increase its strength. In any case, the Greeks did not lend themselves to it, and the Romans only in the Christian era, when reason and scepticism were disappearing amidst a climate of pseudo-religious mass psychosis.

With the annihilation of the genital organ, evil was uprooted, so to speak, and the mania for perfection became absolute. "Their ardent faith", writes Henri Graillet about the eunuch priests of Cybele, "their austere way of life and their strict discipline were a most effective example. Many doubting souls were drawn to these interpreters of the divine word, who were superior to other men precisely because they were no longer men; they heard confessions and encouraged examinations of conscience, but also dispensed consolation and divine hope".

Among the Greeks, on the other hand, sexual asceticism was much more unusual and celibacy was by no means the rule. Generally, priests and priestesses were forbidden only a second marriage.

On the swamp of paganism

In any case, the ground was already prepared for the Christian campaign for chastity. Apart from not a few of the mystical religions, some thinkers were also engaged in moral preaching. Epictetus went so far as to condemn concupiscence in relations with women, and - on a very different note - the Stoa and other philosophical schools, as well as the novel of the time, equated women with men, at least in theory. The New Testament, in general, is full of ethical postulates taken from pre-Christian times.

While Franz Overbeck, Nietzsche's friend, one of the most honest theologians God has been good enough to give us, stated that Christianity has made its appearance in a world "whose culture was at such a height that we may well ask whether mankind today has reached it again (...)", Catholics see things in a different light.

different. So paganism is overflowing with "corruption" and "hotbeds of perverse vices"; "before Christ" everything is a "swamp". Even Buddhism, which flatly rejects lust and adultery, brings "no kindly traits". And as for the high position of the Egyptian woman, it is not worth reflecting it "in more detail" as it does not fit well with the approach taken. On the other hand, the "picture of the immorality of Roman women in the time of Christ" is "so repugnant that (...)"... that we need not "drawing parallels with our times". "These frankly impose themselves and fill thoughtful men with uneasy concern". Well, after so much Christian education, have we at least reached the point from which we started (cf. *infra*)?

Let us trace the almost two millennia of crusade against pleasure ^[51].

SECOND BOOK

THE CHRISTIAN STARTING POINT

The "Good News" had behind Jesus the worst of the news on its heels: Paul's. In Paul the counter-figure of the "joyful messenger" takes shape. In Paul the counter-figure of the "joyful messenger" takes shape, the genius of hatred, of the vision of hatred, of the inexorable logic of hatred. This disangelist! He sacrificed everything on the altar of hatred! And first and foremost the Saviour.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

CHAPTER 6

JESUS

(...) Joy, that man is born into the world.

JOHN, 16. 21

May his many sins be forgiven, for he has loved much.

LUCAS, 7, 47

Jesus deals with marriage zealously, almost passionately.

MARTIN RADE, theologian

Sex life, in itself, is not a sin for him.

HERBERT PREISKER, theologian

Christian asceticism has no support in Jesus. Jesus stands celibacy, female and marital discrimination, fasting and other penitential practices as little as militarism or exploitation.

He never revolted against the libido as such, never considered the sexual, per se, as contrary to God. Nor does continence play any role in the common traditional substratum prior to the four gospels. It is not hard to imagine how radically Jesus would have condemned the world of instincts if the matter had mattered to him. Instead he used to associate even with sinners and prostitutes. And the legends of his virgin birth - which are found only in the most recent gospels - are not so much in the gospels as they are in the gospels of the most recent gospels.

The new and recent ones, modelled on the children of gods, born in exactly the same way, do not include any kind of ascetic commentary either ⁽¹⁵²⁾.

No word on celibacy

A mysterious biblical sentence reads: "There are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb. And there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by human hands. And there are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. He who can understand let him understand." But this passage, which led certain Christians to nothing less than castration (*infra*), appears only in St. Matthew. It is missing in all the other Gospels; presumably because it would have shocked "the ears of the Gentiles" but probably because Jesus never said it, for it is an interpolation of Matthew. In Paul's time it was hardly known. Otherwise, how could the slanderer of women and marriage have been unaware of it, and how could he have stolen it from us in chapter 7 of his first Letter to the Corinthians? Did he not expressly admit that there was no word from the Lord about virginity? And, remarkably, Jesus does not speak of the unmarried or celibate ("agamoi"), but of the castrated, i.e. those who were unfit for marriage ("eunuchoi"). Certainly, the passage is difficult and admits of various interpretations. What is indisputable, however, is that it does not specify to which circle of eunuchs it refers, so that the phrase cannot serve as a basis for a generalised celibacy. Moreover, it was only exceptionally interpreted in this sense by popes or synods.

No word against women and marriage

Jesus related to women in complete freedom. He did not consider them of second rank and never put them aside. The idea is not disproved by the fact that there were no women in the circle of the twelve.

The latter is clearly a purely late symbolic construction, corresponding to the twelve Patriarchs and the twelve Tribes of Israel. Women were among Jesus' disciples and, among his later followers, were perhaps more numerous than men. According to an ancient version of Luke, Jesus was accused by the Jews, among other things, of seducing and leading women (and children) astray. Jesus addressed women, which in a man, and even more so in a rabbi, was inappropriate (*supra*) and puzzled his proselytes. He broke the Sabbath for a woman, healed many women spectacularly, and they thanked him, helped him, and stood by his side until the cross, when his disciples, with the exception of Joseph of Arimathea, had long since hollowed out their wings.

Jesus took part in a wedding feast. As if that were not enough, he did not even condemn an adulteress: "may her many sins be forgiven her, for she has loved much", a sentence which, of course, already made the early Christians uncomfortable. No other New Testament text has been so reinterpreted, and repeated attempts have been made to eliminate it by hook or by crook. Luther drew from the story the conclusion that Jesus himself, together with Mary Magdalene (considered by the Cathars to be his wife or concubine) and others, had probably violated marriage in order to be a full partaker of human nature. In any case, since he did not consider women as a thing, he did not consider adultery as a crime against property either. Although certain details point in that direction, it remains unprovable that he himself was married; which at times has been thought quite possible.

Jesus conceived of marriage as strictly as almost anyone had ever done before, but he did not say the least about its purpose. And no word of his can be found against it. Otherwise, how eagerly Paul, the enemy of marriage, would have clung to it in his first Letter to the Corinthians. Instead, he had to admit that he had no precept from the Lord on the subject. Here, too, Jesus evidently shared the position of the Jews. Any mitigation of the libido within marriage - which later became an inescapable requirement of the Church - had to seem absurd to them, a

position alluded to in that phrase - a resounding affirmation of physical love - according to which spouses are to be "one flesh".

Jesus' own brothers, who later joined the community, were also married, as were his early followers. Some even took their wives with them on missionary journeys, among them the chief apostle, Peter, who, in any case, speaking from the mouth of St. Jerome, "washed away the filth of marriage" by his martyrdom.

The "glutton and wine drinker"... an ascetic?

After , Jesus himself was no ascetic. Jesus himself was no ascetic. The account of his forty-day fast is a mere parable of temptation that clearly borders on the mythical and, moreover, has numerous parallels in Heracles, Zarathustra or Buddha. On the other hand, this dubious fast is singular. Jesus does not, like John the Baptist, settle in the desert; on the contrary, he moves away from it, precisely because he reproves mortification. And of course, he fights against the asceticism of the Pharisees. He does not avoid the world, pleasures or feasts, but fasts so little that his enemies call him a "glutton and a winebibber". It is surprising how often he is invited or hosted. And his disciples, the Bible says, "did not fast"; they attended the banquets "with joy" which, by the way, left them when it was their turn to fast in the name of the Lord.

At the beginning of the ^{second} century it was still known that Jesus had not preached mortification. He had not said: "Set aside a few days of fasting! break your backs!... the idea in itself is nonsense. On the contrary, the Letter of Barnabas, an instruction from the circle of the Apostolic Fathers, commands: "What do I care for your fasting? And if you bend your neck to the ground and put on a penitential sackcloth and lie down on ashes, you do not appreciate that as a satisfactory fast (...), but let each one free himself from the prison of injustice and untie the bonds of forced labor and free the oppressed and break off all evil dealings. Break your bread with the

and if you see the naked, clothe him, and if he is homeless, welcome him into your house" [\[53\]](#).

In the meantime, the decisive reaction had already begun with St. Paul.

CHAPTER 7

PAUL

For the cares of the flesh mean death (...)

ROMANS, 8, 6

For St. Paul, the sin of the flesh almost always precedes all other sins in the catalogue of vices.

BOUSSET, theologian^[54]

In , women, as sexual beings, are treated with strong contempt.

PREISKER, theologian^[55]

Only an ascetic for whom marriage, as an order of creation, has lost all value, can speak (...) like St. Paul.

CAMPENHAUSEN, theologian^[56]

Having recommended his celibate way of life to all Christians (I Cor., 7, 25), Paul has served in all ages as the chief witness in favour of celibacy, although he added that in this matter he had no specific precept from the Lord and could only offer purely personal advice (I Cor., 7, 25).

DENZLER. theologian^[57]

Manure and good smell

St. Paul, who considers that, apart from Christ and his doctrine, everything is "He has also promoted a series of blatantly anti-Jesus dogmas which have served as the very foundation of Christianity, whether he has established the defamation of sexuality, the deferral of women, the disregard of marriage and asceticism. (Suffice it to say that a book riddled with quotations from a certain Catholic author does not rely on any Gospel passage when it asserts, adventurously, that it was not St. Paul who first introduced asceticism into Christianity, that asceticism is "in no way foreign" to "Christ's Christianity" and that the Pauline Ideal was "the very Ideal Christi").

The birth of Christian morality

We find the root "askein" (infra) only once in the entire New Testament, and only in the mouth of Paul, this supposedly bald and bow-legged man, who also suffered from hallucinatory crises, perhaps of epileptic origin. In spite of everything, and in total contradiction with the Gospel, his letters thunder us with mortification, the annihilation of the affections, the hatred of the body. The *sarx*, the flesh, appears as the true seat of sin. In the body there is "nothing good"; it is a "body for death", all that it wants "means death" and "enmity against God". The Christian has to "torment and subdue" "crucify" and "kill" the body, and so on.

Repeatedly, Paul - perhaps an impotent man since childhood, or at least a man replete with sexual complexes - combats "lust" (*porneia*), "vice", "works of darkness", "orgies and bacchanals", "orgies and bacchanals" and "sexual abuse".

"The New Testament calls homosexuals "dogs" - the New Testament calls homosexuals "dogs" - "acts of impurity, fornication and debauchery". These sins are above all others. Then already

come idolatry, hostility, violence, discord and so on. Repeatedly we read: "mortify your members that are attached to earthly things, wherein dwell lust, immorality, passions, evil desires (...)". "Flee fornication! Every other sin that a man commits is outside his body, but he who commits fornication sins against his own body".

With such attacks on pleasure - this is the hour of the birth of Christian morality - Paul sinks below even the Judaism of his time. The teachers of the Torah were at least able to combine contempt for women with a positive valuation of sexuality. On the other hand, St. Paul, who in his Apology for Love speaks of suffering all things, enduring all things, expecting all things, in Corinth hands over to the Devil a lover (presumably the lover of a daughter or stepdaughter of his) and declares that he is ripe for Hell ^[58].

Muzzle and veil for women

Of course, as a missionary, Paul needed women; he praises them in the salutations of his letters as "co-workers" and "fighters". He also equates them with men, but before God (as he does with slaves and masters!): a parity which, by the way, already existed in the cult of Isis and, similarly, in the mysteries of Eleusis and Andania. In , however. Paul deprives women of the right to speak in the cult, as a matter of principle.

"Women in the assemblies of the community must keep silent, for they are not allowed to speak, but must submit (...)": this is the sadly famous "Mulier taceat in ecclesia", something that has made history; and not only Church history. Not even Mary herself deserves a single mention for Paul.

The poor idea he has of woman is demonstrated by the hierarchy of the first Letter to the Corinthians: God-Christ-Man-Woman-Woman. Moreover, he orders her - "in no less than sixteen verses" (Kari Barth) - to wear the veil during prayer and the divine office: a sign of her inferiority, for wearing the veil means "to be ashamed of the sin brought into the world by

the woman". Paul goes on to slander woman, for man, on the contrary, "is the image and reflection of God. It is not man who comes from woman, but woman from man; nor was man created for woman's sake, but woman for man's sake". And he still pulls the Old Testament Legend of the Fall out of his sleeve in an anti-feminist sense: "Thus it is that the woman must wear a sign of subjection on her head, because of the angels".

One has to be a charismatic servant of the Church to be able to write that this passage places "neither man over woman nor woman man" and even that, "rightly considered" Paul lowered the position of man and "indirectly" initiated the emancipation of woman!^[59].

It is good not to touch any woman

The disqualification of marriage also plunges the exegetes into insurmountable difficulties. The apostle does not conceive of a spiritual, emotional or social community between man and woman, only a merely sexual one.

St. Paul opens the discussion with the fundamental *l'ras*: it is "good for a man not to touch a woman". He does not proscribe marriage, he even considers it better than burning, but he wishes, nevertheless, "that all men were like me", that is, unmarried. He expressly qualifies it as "commendable". Men and women, widows and young people, all he would like to see "free" from marriage, they would be "happier" without marriage; if he admits it, it is merely a concession to the flesh, as a necessary evil "because of fornication": but to remain unmarried "is better".

Therefore, it is quite clear what the apostle teaches there in his own cause. Nevertheless, Paul, according to Catholic exegesis, inaugurates "a new period for women". Paul, according to Catholic exegesis, inaugurates "a new period for women", conceives a "completely new feminine ideal" and intones "the Song of Songs on marriage" ^[60].

We will continue to listen to you.

THIRD BOOK

THE RELIGIOUS

"(...) Absolutely, the counter-figure of a strong spirit".

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

CHAPTER 8

THE ORIGIN OF REGULAR ORDERS

1. THE ASCETAS

Undoubtedly, a positive assessment of ascetic phenomena is only possible in relation to psychopathology.

K. SCHJELDERUP^[61]

Every form of asceticism is a form of vanity, since it values the welfare of one's own soul more than that of others.

ERNEST BORNEMAN^[62]

A religious man thinks only of himself.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE^[63]

Asceticism, which was neither taught nor practised by Jesus, became a characteristic of Christianity, although it was, like everything else in it without exception, of non-Christian origin, both the fact itself and the concept. The Greek "askein", to practise, to do something with care, is first found in Hornero and Herodotus, in the sense of technical or artistic labour, and describes later, in Thucydides, Xenophon or Plato, first and foremost bodily training. Finally, when we move from the artistic and athletic sphere to the religious sphere, the concept is changed, in a typical shift of meaning, almost into its opposite: instead of strengthening the body, the concept of "training for the body" becomes the opposite of "training for the body".

of the body, its "mortification"; instead of "worldly" glory, "the crown of eternal life" is now longed for.

Such axiological mutations are not rare and even less so in Christianity; for example, with the words "gymnasium" "pedagogue" "platonic love" or "chastity" whose Latin root ("castimonia" from "carere": to lack, to deprive oneself) had a negative meaning, although it comes from "agnitio" (recognition, formalisation), a concept belonging to the sacred betrothal: the wife of the god, the priestess, could not have sexual relations with strangers, but she gave herself to ritual copulation with the priest! The most extreme asceticism occurs where the two terms of a duality (body and soul, world and god) are sharply confronted, when people, tormented by a profound schizophrenia and resorting to flight from the world, abstinence or any form of denial, aspire to free themselves from the principle of "the world", aspire to get rid of the "bad" principle and exchange it for the "good" principle, be it annihilation of the senses, victory over the flesh, redemption or, as Nietzsche mockingly put it, "that calm, that long-awaited total hypnosis" [64].

Models of Christian monasticism

India, the classic land of Salvation, also became the cradle of asceticism.

The Rigveda, still polytheistic, worldly and vital (supra), already speaks of secret ecstatic leagues, "rapturous people, with long hair, dressed in filth, who let themselves be carried away by the breath of the wind when the gods have entered them". And in the later parts of the work, especially in the tenth and last book, the inner ardor, the tapas, acquires a notorious presence. In fact, tapas may originally have been a simple technique for raising body temperature in the northern Indian winter. But gradually the purely physiological purpose became mystical-religious, demanding ever stricter self-mastery. In the Aranyakas or Books of the Forest, essential texts of the later Vedas, the anchorite priests already impart

ascetic instructions. Polygamy, of course, is still permitted and even saints like Yājñavalkya -remembered in the Great Book of the Forest - love the pomp of princely courts and are bigamos!

By contrast, the older Upanishads, closely related to the Aranyakas but sceptical and pessimistic, proclaim penance as an ideal. The same was true, in short, of Brahmanism, in which Schopenhauer recognised his own intellectual heritage, and in the world appears as phantasmagoria ("maya") and a longing for salvation is awakened that the ancient Vedic religion did not know. "Lead me from darkness to light / Lead me from death to what is after death".

After some male and female orders were founded in the 8th century by Prince Parsva, eremitism and monasticism spread throughout India and the ascetic was held in high esteem because of his supposed supernatural powers. Many of them, disappointed with pleasures or bad luck, live in loincloths or naked, shaven and covered with ashes, isolated in forests, caves or mountains. Others go about begging and doing penance. The fanatics expose themselves, between four campfires, to the scorching sun, swing upside down from trees, remain on one leg for months, half-buried in anthills until birds nest in their heads or horribly mutilate themselves. The virtuous Christians of mortification will offer very similar spectacles. The ascetic influence of India on early Christianity, long supposed but mostly contested, has been amply proved by new research.

Two hundred and fifty years after Parsva, Prince Mahavira (died ca. 477 B.C.) - who appeared on the scene as a naked beggar - reformed the orders, which reverted to draconian asceticism: mostly fasting, in the most meritorious of cases to the point of death. And Mahavira's contemporary, Buddha (ca. 560-480) - who went around followed by the "necropolis" of his harem - fed himself for years on a minimal diet, so that in the end he "looked like a shrunken melon or a black shadow" until, like Jesus later on, he was "like a shrunken melon or a black shadow".

or Mohammed, rejected (extreme) asceticism as useless. However, Buddhist monasticism - an ideal of Buddhism that had just emerged at that time and has never gone beyond the minority - was strongly tinged with asceticism, even misogyny, as was later the case in Christian monasticism, with which it shows absolutely striking parallels.

Before the Catholic orders there were also the *reclusi* and *reclusae* of the Egyptian serapeum. And precisely the first organiser of Christian monasticism, the Coptic Pachomius, was probably a priest of Serapis. In any case, his first seat was a temple of Serapis and later he introduced the tonsure, customary in the cult of Serapis, among his monks.

Finally, the following also contributed to the formation of Christian monasticism: neo-pythagoreanism, in which a more or less conventual form of association, the community of goods and various forms of abstinence were practised;

Gnosticism, in which debauchery (infra) and severe mortification coexisted; and, from the third century, Manichaeism, which differentiated between the perfect and the proselytes, forbade dealing with women and the consumption of meat and wine, and demanded seclusion, absolute poverty and the total extinction of love for parents and children, including at least some infiltrations of Indian monasticism, which Mani had known ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾.

How and why Christian monks came into existence

However, the "specialists of suffering", the "pugilists of Christ", who were to "anticipate by centuries Nietzsche's [precisely] expression 'live dangerously'", eclipsed all the others.

And yet they did not exist in the early days, even though the life of the early Christians until well into the second century was in fact quite withdrawn. They were almost all waiting for the end of the world which they believed was imminent! Jesus, the apostles, the whole of early Christianity fanatically believed in it, until it was revealed to be a fallacy and the Church substituted the expectation of the

imminent end for the longer term and the longed-for earthly reign of the Messiah for "eternal bliss".

Nevertheless, the Christians lived in strict seclusion, waiting for the return of the Lord. They went neither to the theatre, nor to the games, nor to the feasts of gods and emperors. Everywhere there were ascetics starving. And when, at the end of the ^{second} century, proselytes multiplied - especially in the then emerging Catholicism - ascetics formed the core of the community. They practised complete sexual abstinence, fasted and prayed frequently and gradually formed a status of their own. Eventually, they abandoned family and society and a kind of exodus was organised. Some still remained in the vicinity of towns and villages; others moved to the desert, "the maternal soil of monasticism" of the Morgan fairies... and of camels.

The word "monk" (from "monos": alone) appears for the first time in the Christian milieu around the year 180 - at the hand of a heretic, the Ebionite Symachus. But there was no Christian monasticism proper until the beginning of the 4th century. Then, some Christians began to live alone or in groups, but without firm laws or prescriptions. Around 320 a monastery arose in Tabennisi (Egypt) led by Pachomius, a former Roman soldier. It was he who wrote the first monastic rule, which imposed military discipline and which, directly or indirectly, influenced the rules of Basil, Cassian and Benedict. By the 5th century, cenobitic monasticism had grown to such an extent that the state's tax revenues collapsed, and it spread throughout Syria, the East and eventually the West.

The primary cause of this split in Christianity, which divided it into a double morality long defended as a "double way to God", was the strong process of secularisation, the total politicisation of the leaders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. There were often vehement disputes between monasteries and bishops ^[66]. In a short time, however, the Church succeeded in putting asceticism and monasticism at its service and was thus able to strengthen its power through what had begun as a mystical protest against it, as a flight from and renunciation of the world.

2. THE "HOLY VIRGINS"

"I do not exalt virginity because it is possessed by martyrs, but because it leads to martyrdom".

AMBROSIUS, Doctor of the Church^[67]

"Even if your father had thrown himself at the threshold, even if your mother, bare-breasted, had shown you the breasts with which she fed you (...); pass over your father; pass over your mother! And flee with closed eyes to the standard of the cross!"

BERNARDO DE CLARAVALL, Doctor of the Church^[68]

Alongside Christian wives, young women and widows, the "saints" or The "virgins consecrated to God" also formed a circle of their own. In the second century, these *santimoniales* - living in the house of their parents or relatives - are still only occasionally mentioned; but by the end of the third century, the phenomenon is already developing in their quarters in Egypt. Obligated to perpetual celibacy, they guarded the most sacred of their possessions in houses for maidens, which evidently existed before the monasteries of monks. At the 4th century -when the women The "consecrated to God" already made their vows in public, and a little later they took the habit - their communities were already quite frequent in the East. In the 5th century they increased in the West, and by the 6th century there were already a large number of monasteries.

Incitement to insanity

The initiative for the task came from the very beginning from the Church itself. For, as one of the blessed with the clerical kitsch once in use said, "the family soil was not conducive to delicate plants and, as

Mother Church, a restless gardener, tried to raise the best offspring in protected places and under her particular guidance".

So she isolated these poor beings and watched over them with the eyes of Argus, recommending taciturnity and recollection, warning against public baths, wedding banquets and all kinds of visits, especially to the houses of married couples, and even advising the novices to go less frequently to church, where, moreover, they were introduced a reserved space, enclosed by barriers. Most of the the nuns had to devote themselves to fasting, praying and singing spiritual hymns; and, not least, they were taught to appreciate the "blessing of work": "ora et labora". For even then it was already known what Wieland formulated in the Oberon: "Nothing keeps (...) the senses at peace with duty so well as to keep them busy with work until they are weary". Apart from that, it provided money. Thus, a double, a triple blessing. In this way these Caste Women were presented to the Evil World as the truest and best of Christianity, even as saints. The veneration of the saints had begun with the martyrs. But since there were no more martyrs, at least among Catholics - for among the others, the number soon began to increase - the preservation of virginity functioned as a kind of substitute for martyrdom.

The Fathers of the Church excited indefatigably these behaviour (if one can speak of excitement in this respect). From the third century, and even more so from the fourth century onwards, there was a proliferation of treatises extolling virginity, narcotic turpentine in which virgins shine as "temples of the Logos", "ornament and ornament", "flower on the tree life of the Church", or as the "best part of Christ's flock" and "the family of angels". The nuns hear of the heavenly reward, of the "unfading crown", of the "palm of victory"; they are described the angelic legions and the meadows of paradise; they are reminded of Mary, whom they will embrace, of Jesus, who will be the one to praise their merits before God himself: "Holy Father, behold those who (...)" and so forth. For they were always careful to ensure that there was no lack of promises... on the one hand, and foolishness on the other. "The people have big, pointed ears" writes Amos Holz, "and those who herd them are called rabbis, fathers and shepherds".

Many "Fathers" wrote their own works in praise of virginity: Athanasius, Ambrose, Methodius of Olympus, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Ancyra. These treatises surpass Hellenistic asceticism in all its pathos and grandiloquence, and even play the card of the Song of Songs - a heady celebration of an unquestionably erotic-sexual love - to the greater glory of the immaculate virgin ^[69].

"And he will touch your belly".

St. Jerome, who had long ago stumbled "on the slippery path of virtue", now proclaims, like others of his ilk, that virginity is the "daily martyrdom" by commending it *in excessu*, being horrified by the "exquisite, plump and red" women who, though "healthy" (!), go into the bathroom, among married men and curly-haired teenagers, holding their breasts while listening to the rustling of their silk tights, and, indolently getting up, exhibit "their white shoulders in their beautiful nakedness", showing all the time "that which pleases most" instead of just talking, sighing and joking in the bedroom with the spiritual Bridegroom, as he now exhorts them to do. But as soon as a light sleep has overtaken you," he mellifluously suggests to the girl, perhaps more inspired by the memory of his own relaxed youth (and perhaps not only by the memory) than by the Holy Spirit, "he will come and "touch your belly" (*et tanget ventrem tuum*).

Jerome does not cease to deal with the blessed subject of spiritual courtship! Could it be that he, who was surrounded - surely like no other - by so many society ladies (Marcela, Asella, Paula), was also devoted to developing them? Rumours circulated about this, rumours that he could hardly keep quiet when, when his situation in Rome became more complicated, he fled with his closest friend. Paula, to Bethlehem, where she would also be followed by the beautiful young woman who had suggested the prophecy of the famous touching.

"Eustochy", says Luther with his own unascetic instinct, "would have been able to help and advise Jerome" ^[70].

Don't even let them know there are men!

One has to read the educational programme conceived by this doctor of the Church for the little daughter of his devout Roman if one wants to have any notion of criminal pedagogy. "Music is forbidden; the child must not know what the flutes, lyres or zithers are for. She must learn to read with the names of the apostles and prophets and with the lineage of Christ (Mt., 1, Le., 3). Her lady-in-waiting not be beautiful or well composed, but a grave, pale, dishevelled ("sordidata") and old maid who raises her in the evenings to chant the prayers and psalms and prays the hours with her in the daytime (...) She will not take any baths, for they violate the sense of modesty of a girl, who should never contemplate herself naked. Ideally, as soon as she is weaned (!), she should be taken away as quickly as possible from her mother and the sinful Rome on the road to Bethlehem and, being brought up in that convent, under the supervision of her grandmother and aunt, she should be kept out of sight of any man and should not even know that there is another sex (!). Then the mother will also be dispensed from the care of the daughter and will be able to devote herself without hindrance to the ascetic life".

Augustine is not sparing in his praise of chastity either, and, by True, an Augustinian assures us, "all the more so as he had been more misguided in his younger years".

In fact, Augustine - a man who, as he himself says, "poured [his] strength into lust and fornication" and then sent his mistress away without further contemplation, who promised himself to a minor at the same time as he took a new beloved, who, in short, lived in concubinage from the age of eighteen to thirty-one (he even had a son, Adeodatus: "gift of God"!), and who some time later still conjured up

The "itch of pleasure" - he was called to be the *laudator* of virginity.

"If only everyone wanted to live like this", wishes the theologian of Christian marriage ⁽⁷¹⁾.

Seduction of minors

For his part. St. Ambrose, who calls *virgines sacrae* a "gift of God" - he also calls slavery so! - not only exhorts parents to bring up virgins, "so that you may have someone by whose merits your crimes ("delights") are expiated", but also persuades girls to remain unmarried, even against the will of parents. "Parents oppose, but want to be defeated," she writes, and advises: "First of all, virgin, overcome filial gratitude. If you defeat your family, you will also defeat the world.

For just as they tried to baptise children as early as possible - a custom which Tertullian still opposed on the threshold of the third century - so it seemed little haste to them to bring them to the monastery. For, following Schopenhauer, "the training of animals, like that of people, is only completely successful in the young years". Many ten-year-old girls are allowed to take the habit and take a perpetual vow of chastity; and also at the age of six, five, even younger. An epitaph on the grave of a girl only three years old, in northern Italy, explains that "she has lived so little in order to rise to God in a more holy way". But not all of them were lucky enough to die shortly after birth.

In St Teresa's time, at the end of the 16th century, boys as young as twelve were still being given to take the habit. On several occasions, Teresa elaborates (infra) on how the girls were accepted into the convent even against the will of the father, mother and fiancé, how quickly the doors were closed behind these creatures, and even how they had been stalking them at the very entrance door and had only returned, at best, by royal order. "God thus populates this house with souls (...)" ^[72].

Among the heterodox, chastity has no value, it is even a crime.

In this matter, virginity, chastity or sexual morality in themselves ceased to be of interest from very early on; instead, the capacity to control people was of interest: power! "In virgins we do not praise the fact that they are virgins" admits St Augustine, "but that they are virgins consecrated to God". An idea as familiar to Thomas Aquinas as it is to modern theology, for which virginity alone has "no moral value" because it is achieved through complete surrender to "God". Even more explicitly, the Doctor of the Church John Chrysostom said of virginity that it was only good among Catholics, while among Jews and heretics it was "worse than adultery itself"!

Therefore, chastity was preached, placing it above all things, at least as an ideal case; but this was not done for love of chastity. How does the monk - and later bishop - Palladius admire the Roman woman who preferred to die by a sword than to give herself to a prefect in love! And John Moschus, how he praises an Alexandrian who plucked out her eyes for the sake of an admirer! How the Middle Ages applauds that nun who preferred to lose her sight rather than love a king! Such stories run through the whole (legendary) history of Christianity.

And modern moral theology, despite its condemnation of suicide, still allows a woman to throw herself into the void "lest she fall into the hands of a depraved man who wants to trap and force her". What's more, she is allowed to kill him! At least as long as his penis has not reached her vagina. After that, revenge killing is forbidden ^[73].

So generations of madmen have mortified themselves to practically the present day for the sake of a chastity which, fundamentally, neither mattered nor matters; whereby their actions have almost always been of an ascetic-sexual nature, even though they apparently did not affect sexuality at all.

CHAPTER 9

CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM IN ANTIQUITY

"Since I set foot in the desert, I have eaten no lettuce or other vegetables, no fruit, no grapes, no meat, and I have never taken a bath."

EVAGRO DE PONTO

"Why do I want to see this light that belongs only to this world and is of no use to anyone?"

Abbot SILVANO (leaving his cell)^[74]

"Never laugh. Be sorrowful for your sins, as one who has a dead man beside him is sorrowful".

Rule of SAN ANTONIO

(...) one of the most precious fruits of the peace of 313.

VILLER/RAHNER, Jesuits^[75]

According to Walter Nigg, sexual offending manifests the "dark side" of monasticism, which its enemies usually adduced "with glee" without even glimpsing "what a bad self-attestation they were thereby extending (...)".

However, the "dark side" of monastic life is not, in fact, that of sexual relations - if we dispense with hypocrisy in the dark matter - it is, rather - something Nigg seems not to suspect - the "love of God" praised by him, with some cheesiness, as "purely straightened to the Eternal, blooming in the monastery like a rosebush"; obscure, especially if it is the result of obsessive mortification, of bloody buttocks, perhaps of castrated genitalia... more neurosis than rosebush, not to say mental illness.

Certainly, asceticism is a complex phenomenon with very contradictory motives and very contradictory effects. On certain occasions, detachment from the world and temporary abstinence can be absolutely convenient, reasonable, indispensable; biological necessity, expression of a contained desire or of self-knowledge, optimal condition for a high spirituality. Asceticism concerns the economy of lifestyle and the presuppositions of creative action. There is hardly any culture without asceticism. A night of love, says Balzac, perhaps without exaggeration, means a novel without writing. And Hemingway, likewise, fears "leaving the best part of the book in bed". For others, of course, the opposite is true; it is not renunciation but satisfaction that is productive. Thus Schopenhauer writes - in complete conformity, moreover, with the corresponding recommendations of the Talmudists (*supra*) - that a philosopher should "be active not only with his head but also with his genitals" and therefore advises marriage *quatre*... often wrongly understood.

On the contrary, asceticism resulting from the fear of sexuality and the anti-feminism, which despises beauty, tramples on all nature, indulges in melancholy, weariness or pain, which hates and scourges its own body and, finally, which elevates suffering to the status of a profession in order to travel the "individual and immediate road to God" in order to achieve the "personal charisma" or one's own "spiritual salvation" ("salvation of the soul"; in German: "the world revolves around me" Nietzsche), this asceticism, born of a jealous egoism, is the blackest night, it is a domain, in particular, of those who, as Rutilius Claudius Numatianus notes in 417, in the course of his journey from Rome to Gaul,

freely choose unhappiness out of unhealthy fear of their own misfortunes in life: a mixture of superstition, fanaticism and nervous disease ([76]).

... A simple little priggish underling

Asceticism has been celebrated for two thousand years as exemplarily energetic and heroic... and how far it was from being so! For from the beginning it was about apathetic natures, handicapped, frigid people, people of impaired sensibility, to whom penitential discipline comes easily and whose abstinence is as much an expression of "virtue", spirituality or strength as is the loss of sight of the vigour of the eyes. So the chaste and penitent human type, always glorified by the clergy, is not that ascetic who would have developed extraordinary energies; nor is he the titan brimming with energy, nor the self-conquering hero, but a weak, ideologically duped person, a simple, small, prudish subordinate, who does not want to be chaste on his own initiative, but only because has been suggested to him, because it has been formally inculcated in him, even as a child. For such a man does not become a fanatic out of firmness or spiritual autarchy, but out of dependence, out of weakness. He has to cling completely to an illusion simply in order to exist. Thus Nietzsche describes fanaticism as the only "force of will" to which the weak can be attracted, and ascetics as "mere sturdy donkeys" and "the absolute opposite of a strong spirit".

In reality, the beings described as chaste succumb most of the time to the sometimes to the pressure of society, which prevents them from living their nature urges them to and instead endorses a "victory over self" over the "lower instincts" over the "beast within us" or "the beast within us". "the Bad". "While the Integrated is proud of the renunciations that torment him and thinks that they correspond to what is true, to the best of himself, to his highest ideal of being human, while his neurologist tells him how much he esteems him, the ideologists of morality know very well how such ideals arise".

But isn't there a completely different kind of Christianity; an active, joyful, joyful Christianity? Of course, what kind of Christianity is there not? There are all kinds of Christianities. If one does not fit the script of the Church, it invokes another; if this one does not fit, it invokes a third. In this way, the Church ballasted the fanatics with mortification in order to better protect them and always demanded less from the masses, from the laxest people, for the same reason. Here it taught the most extreme contempt for life (supra), there it esteemed the world as the marvellous work of God! All of which, evidently, is a simple expression of that theological species which was explained not long ago in Rome - with the impassivity of the ecclesiarchs - as "the central distinctive of Christianity", as belonging to "the essence of Christianity" and "beyond logic" (a theological periphrasis to designate the opposite of all logic).

In any case, ascetic Christianity served as the only permanent ideal, as a model. For the more someone was ready to resign himself to resignation, to renunciation, even in his most elementary demands, the more easily he allowed himself to be ruled. Thus only asceticism acted as an exemplary imprint of the faith, and in such a way that even a Catholic admits that "unfortunately, in the development of ecclesiastical doctrine, Christians predisposed in favour of asceticism were the only ones who had to "make history". They have fatally influenced the whole Christian tradition" ^[77].

How one of them would have liked to...

Exactly. And that is why we are not, and never will , interested in how a particular theology wants asceticism to be understood at a given moment, but in how it has been understood and practised for two thousand years. We are concerned with the histories and lives of sixty generations of Christians, but not with the pretexts of those theologians who are lightly labelled as "progressive" just because they follow, obviously with

their tongues out, the changes of the times: always ready to turn back at the first whistle of their master.

The latter, taking courage, now find that asceticism proves to be The "anachronistic", which no longer "holds up" in a consumer society, which does not find a home even "among the monks who were once ascetics by their very profession". They then explain what all this has really meant. To begin with, the terminology is somewhat disguised, this and that are renamed, suggesting to everyone that with a different word we are dealing with something else: it is no longer a question of asceticism, but of "saving the instincts", of

To "rule them", which does not sound so bad, almost seems like a good deed, perhaps a small blessing, in any case a remedy; even if the too explicit "renounce" is not always avoided. Then it is stressed, despite two thousand years of doctrine to the contrary, that Jesus offered "no ascetic programme" and it is boldly asserted that "St. Paul thinks similarly" (cf. above). What followed thereafter were radical "misunderstandings" which, moreover, "did not obtain ecclesiastical recognition"! On the contrary/antagonism towards the body and sexuality flourished in Platonism and at the Manichaeism. The asceticism is, by added, "Gnostic" and "Stoic" but in any case "apocryphal" in Christianity. For Christian asceticism - and this is nothing less than demanded (once again imputing to others what one is guilty of oneself) - "must (!) be free of that avoidance of the world which is so dear to the Buddhists (!)" because it is precisely the Christian, "by virtue of his mission in the world and his faith in the resurrection" (the main cause of asceticism!), "who has the least reason for an attitude of hostility towards the world and the body". Finally, it is acknowledged that such "positive theological contributions" are not yet "the common heritage of theological and Christian thought", i.e. that since Paul the opposite has been the trend.

For the rest, progressives by no means want to (and cannot) abolish asceticism. They simply try to make it acceptable to the "consumer society". So let there be nothing negative, nothing asocial; no more isolation and denial of the world. This is simply a misunderstanding of the last two thousand years. In return, we must "make room for something better", "try out human modes of behaviour" (!),

"initiatives", "responsibility before the world", "passionate engagement with the world", "flight forward with the world"; asceticism would have, why not, "an authentic revolutionary pathos within itself". And so on, many other such impertinences ^[78].

... And how has it been

In reality, the Christian ascetic ideal always had a very different appearance, it was constantly the reverse of the human, of worldly joy, of the revolutionary; or, in other words, it was isolating, contemptuous, the enemy of the world, of the body, of sexuality.

Thus Clement of Alexandria, the first to call Christians dedicated to radical abstinence ascetics, proscribes make-up, adornment and dancing, and recommends renouncing meat and wine until old age. In the same way, his successor Origen demands a life of constant penance and tearful meditations on the Last Judgement. Bishop Basil, a saint and Doctor of the Church (the highest title conferred by the Catholic Church; only two popes out of two hundred and sixty-one have it), forbids Christians to have any fun, even laughter! Gregory of Nyssa compares existence to a "disgusting excrement". Lactantius goes so far as to detect in the perfume of a flower a weapon of the devil; for Zeno of Verona the greatest glory of Christian virtue is to "trample on nature". And an Augustinian explains: "I (...) despise the present, I flee from worldly happiness and rejoice in the promises of God. While those say:

Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we must die (1 Cor., 15, 32), I say, let us fast and pray; for tomorrow death will come".

As far as the monks in particular are concerned. Saint Anthony - "Antonius eremita" or "Antonius abbas" ("eremitarum"), as his title reads in hagiographic literature, in a word, the first known Christian monk - The commandment that Benedict of Nursia also included in his rule and that John Climacus modified in the 7th century: "the monk must be an obedient animal".

endowed with reason" which a modern religious person still celebrates as a classical formulation.

In this "foolishness for the love of God" which was preached at the time, St. Paul was invoked with predilection and his sentences: "what is foolish before the world, God has chosen to confound the wise"; "but if anyone thinks he is wise according to this world, let him become a fool in order to become wise" and other similar brilliancies. For if, following La Rochefoucauld, he who lives without doing anything foolish is not as wise as he thinks he is, it seems to me that he who behaves like a fool will not thereby become a wise man.

However, there were quite a few Christians who believed just that and played the role of madmen with all the means at their disposal and often, let's face it, also on the best of terms - well into the modern age. In the 14th century, Blessed John Colombini became the founder of his own brotherhood of "holy fools", the Jesuits. His motto: "As far as you are able, pretend to be mad for the love of Christ, and you will be wise". His disciples were astride a donkey, with its tail in their hands and an olive branch on their heads, while John himself followed them singing: "Vivat, vivat Jesus Christi!

"... And never laugh!"

Of course, those who lived so happily were a minority among the ascetics, who in the deserts of Egypt alone numbered, at the end of the 4th century, some twenty-four thousand. They vegetated in tombs, in small cells and cages, in the dens of wild beasts, in hollow trees or on columns... demonstrating the "forward flight" and the "revolutionary pathos" (supra).

"Escape from men, stay in your cell and weep for your sins" teaches Abbot Macarius. "Go, go down to your cell, and your cell will teach you everything," opines Abbot Moses. For my sake, do not pray at , but stay in your cell and weep for your sins", teaches Abbot Macarius.

cell", advises Abbot John. The monastic cell, as well as being understood as a tomb, is sometimes referred to as the "tomb".

Contempt for joy and happiness, revolt against existence, antipathy, disgust, total mortification: this is classical Christianity, the Christianity of the best, of the ascetics who lived their life as a life of "crucified ones", as a "vital nailing to the cross of Christ", as a death to all words and deeds that belong to the order of this world. For centuries, self-torture was the main measure of Christian perfection.

Tears and filth

Since ascetics had to weep for their sins incessantly - "there is no way out of this" - many wept night and day: the famous *donum lacrimarum*. The Doctor of the Church Ephrem, a fanatical anti-Semite, wept as naturally as others breathe. "No one has ever seen him with dry eyes". Shenute, a Coptic saint who beat his friars until their cries could be heard throughout the village, apparently shed such fruitful tears that the earth beneath him turned to bogs. St. Arsenius, who filled his cell with stench to spare himself the pestilential odour of Hell, even dropped his eyelids from weeping; he wore a bib for his tearful torrents.

Indeed, this was one of the few times that Christian heroes' bodies came into contact with water. If two thousand years earlier, in the epic of Gilgamesh (*supra*), it was said: "dance and enjoy yourself day and night / your clothes must be clean / wash your head and bathe yourself! St. Anton dispensed with bathing throughout his long eremitic life and never once washed his feet: the order of the Antonians, so named after him, obtained the privilege of pig-breeding and a pig as an attribute; Anton himself became the patron saint of domestic animals. Later, bathing was drastically limited in the monasteries; at Monte Casino, for example, to two or three times a year! In this respect, the filthy Christian ascetics could refer nothing to

less than St. Jerome, Doctor of the Church, who proclaimed that a filthy exterior was a sign of inner purity ^[80].

Spending your life eating grass

Fasting was obligatory.

It had already been kept in the mysteries (above), in the cult of Attis, Isis and Mithras, in Eleusis, among the Orphics and Pythagoreans, in Jainism and Buddhism. The Old Testament also speaks of it and, on one occasion, textually demands it of "the oxen and the sheep". Fasting is a natural law even for modern moral theology, since "by nature (!) it is the duty of everyone (!) to fast as much as is necessary to tame his appetites". So the papacy was able to have human beings put to death just because they had eaten horse meat during the fasting period!

But while the laity fasted only at certain times of the year, they did not fast at all. In early Christianity - in early Christianity on Wednesdays and Fridays - the professionals did it permanently. According to the ancient ascetic words ("true fasting is constant hunger", "the richer the body, the leaner the soul, and vice versa"). Sometimes a grain of barley was pecked out of the camel's shit, but they also fasted for three, four days or a whole week.

Shenute, a great bludgeoner and tireless mourner (*supra*), had fasted so much at the age of sixteen "that his body" as his disciple Visa writes, "He was completely parched and his skin stuck to his bones. "He often ate only once a week (...) His strength was very weak, his body was losing fluids, his tears became as sweet as honey and his eyes were deeply sunken in the sockets like the loopholes in a ship and completely black because of the tears he was shedding in torrents.

St. Jerome was pleased to relate that he had seen a monk who had been living for thirty years on a little barley bread and dirty water; another who lay in a pit and never ate more than five figs a day; a third who had been living on a little barley bread and dirty water; another who lay in a pit and never ate more than five figs a day; a third

who only cut his hair on Easter Sunday, who never cleaned his clothes and only changed his habit when it fell to pieces, and who was so starved that his skin had become "like pumice stone" and his eyes had darkened; in a word, a man whose ascetic bravery Hornero himself would have been incapable of recounting.

Other devout Christians eat only grass. They graze from the very ground, like cows, and increasingly resemble "wild animals". A group of such boskoi or "grass-eaters" vegetated without a roof - constantly singing and praying "according to ecclesiastical rule" - in the mountains around Nisibis in Mesopotamia. The Egyptian omophagi lived on grass, plants and raw cereals alone. And in Ethiopia, in the Chimezana, the hermits had so depleted the grass that the cows had no more nourishment left. As a result, the peasants chased them away to their caves, where they starved to death.

However, the "golden age" of "ruminants" did not come until the 6th century, when it seemed completely natural for Christians to spend their lives eating grass. In fact, grazing became an occupation. The introduction of an anchorite reads: "I am Peter, who grazes by the holy Jordan". At that time, apa Sophronius lived grazing stark naked for seventy years by the Dead Sea ^[81].

"... Deeper forms of religious awareness".

The Syrian ascetics, of whom Bishop Theodoret spoke, ate only rotten food or raw vegetables and lived in cells in which they could neither stand nor lie down. The arboreal David of Thessalonica stayed for three years in the almond tree in the courtyard of a monastery. In Scythia, a well-known Egyptian monastic colony, it was regulated exactly how many steps one could take or how many drops of water one could drink. Christian seekers of Salvation covered themselves with sharp irons of all kinds that pierced their flesh or, following the inauthentic saying of Jesus ("whoever does not take his cross with him..." and so on), went about dragging heavy crosses on their shoulders. Others lived at

In the open sky - in summer and winter - or they were walled up for years so that the sun fell mercilessly on them. Others immersed themselves in freezing water. Some went so far as to throw themselves off a cliff or hang themselves to save their souls. There were those who walked around completely naked, and the prior Macarius (died about 391), a founder of Christian mysticism, explained that whoever did not attain this extreme capacity for renunciation should remain in his cell and mourn his sins.

From time to time there were even formal penitential competitions, grandiose ascetic tournaments between orthodox and schismatic monks: "sportsmen of "holiness". Each side tried to set and break records, wanted to have those who could fast the longest or stand the longest, those who were the best at praying or genuflecting, those who could keep quiet the longest or cry the longest.

Indeed, if Nietzsche's motto were to read "live madly" instead of "dangerously", who would exemplify it better than these monomaniacs and eccentrics, whose inflexible mental weakness even today "Catholics cannot but admire in awe", celebrating it as an example of "heroism" and celebrating their "sanctity" and "self-sanctification" as a "holy" and "self-sanctification".

Is it as an "irresistible force" that "fascinates, moves to follow and creates new and deeper forms of religious consciousness", or as a product of "a magnificent flowering of the influence of the Holy Spirit, formed in full accord with the doctrine of the Gospel"? In the same way, modern Catholic theology continues to consider the holy virgins as

The "most beautiful part of ancient Christian history" as "one of the most adorable and at the same time grandest institutions" as a "flower of the Gospel" and so on ⁽¹⁸²⁾.

"If you expel nature..."

In any case, the struggle against the "flesh", the renunciation of sexual relations, was at the heart of the excesses of weakness that clerics have admired to this day. Beneath all ascetic practices,

of ascetic abstinence, of those ascetic torments and tortures that eventually culminated in suicide, the preservation of chastity was always "the crown and centre" of Christianity.

For sexual asceticism is the most overwhelming burden; and, to be sure, the most enslaving. It is true that St. Augustine proclaimed it as a "source of spiritual freedom", but in fact there are few people so spiritually unfree, so agitated by desire, so tormented by voluptuous visions as the ascetics. It was no coincidence that the worst period of penitential madness after the fall of Rome was also the most uncultured! For he who wants to dominate sexuality permanently, is permanently dominated by it. It is abstinence that renders it inordinate, irresistible, that, as Luther says, makes the heart of the chaste man - who "thinks of fornication day and night" - "a veritable brothel" and attacks him "like a raging dog". Whether the chaste man throws himself naked among the ants, like Macarius, or wallows on thorns, like St. Benedict ("he lies down on thorns and furiously scratches his backside"), the chaste man is "a real brothel". Luther, Table Talks), if the body is scourged or the flesh torn off, the subjugated instinct simply takes revenge; in a word, it becomes all the more savage and incendiary the more nature is denied; then the instinct afflicts the ascetic more vehemently, and he often employs all his strength in the struggle against temptation.

This has been recognised very early on, and by all sides. For it did not Horace alone wrote: "if you drive Nature out with the blow of the gallows, she will return"; later paraphrased emphatically by P. N. Destouches: "Chassez le naturel, il revient au galop". Prior Cassian also knew this: "The difficulty of the struggle increases in proportion to the strength of each individual and to human development". However, this was not the only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from this, but the call to struggle was constantly renewed, and so many staggered from one neurosis to another, into ever greater darkness, with fits of madness leading to madness itself, as St. Jerome admits. Jerome himself confesses that he was carried away in the midst of young dancing girls while, overexcited by sensual tingling, he kept company with scorpions and beasts: My face was pale from fasting, but the spirit burned within me," he said.

cold body by warm desires, and in the fantasy of a person long dead to flesh nothing boiled but the fire of evil pleasure" [83].

"Contingencies" and women "in all positions".

An ancient chronicler laments that, in their hermitages, the chaste men were "victims, quite often, of a more than usual nocturnal contingency". This "contingency" would also have troubled the hermits during the day and distracted them almost completely from prayer. A certain monk seems to have had the "contingency" whenever he wanted to receive communion. And the more strictly the devotees fasted, reports the chronicler, the more often they suffered from pollutions. In the world, he supposes, this would have happened much more rarely: "for the women one sees are usually less dangerous than the women one thinks of".

Certainly, if women could threaten the ascetics even *in natura* - as the malignant ulcer on the penis of Stephen, a hermit in the Marmarica proves - the imagined ones dominated them completely. For what the monks considered or wanted to consider as external temptations, as visions of hell, what appeared to them in flesh and blood in the darkness of their grottoes and tombs, when the desert wind howled at night around their cells and the growling of wild animals beat in their ears, or when the "noonday demon" attacked them with fever and chills most of the time hardly bearable, all these were but manifestations of their own (unconscious) desires, which, moreover, St. Anthony already suspects: "Demons accommodate their appearance to the thoughts they find in us; what we think for ourselves they adorn with largesse".

Thus, these chaste men were constantly harassed and whipped by sexuality, tyrannised by dreams and licentious visions. Again and again. Satan and his cronies appeared to them in the form of beautiful girls, of "whole legions of naked women", of "whole legions of naked women". "in all positions".

The devout Hilarion, during his sexual outbursts, beat his ascetic breast. Evagros, while still in winter, threw himself into a fountain and cooled his ardor in it all night long. The monk Ammonius, so God-fearing that he cut off his ear to avoid becoming a bishop ("omnimodis monachum fugere deberé mulieres et episcopos"), when he saw his lust awakening, he burned "sometimes that limb, sometimes the other". And the hermit Pachomius, who was being severely harassed, almost let his phallus be bitten by a snake, but then followed the inner voice: "go and fight!"

From eunuchs to the genital test

Many monks underwent infibulation to preserve their chastity. The heavier the ring they wore on their member - some were six inches in diameter and weighed a quarter of a pound - the greater their pride. Others knotted thick irons around their penis and gradually became like eunuchs.

But in fact neither will nor self-hatred, nor "grace" nor any other method was of any use to the problem, with the exception of the most radical, that which extirpated the evil at its root: castration. Castration was not considered illegitimate as the quickest means of preserving "purity" and, as St. Epiphanius relates without censure, was frequently practised. Many Church authorities of antiquity extolled the "eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God". The Christian Sextus still made recommendations to this effect around the year 200, in a widely read anthology of sentences. The priest Leontius of Antioch, who had become suspect because of his "marriage of Joseph" (infra), castrated himself and, although he lost his priestly office first, he later became a bishop. And even Origen, the most important theologian of the first three centuries, who reviled women as daughters of Satan, emasculated himself for ascetic reasons: "a magnificent testimony to his faith and continence" in the praise of the Church historian Bishop Eusebius.

However, when this madness became widespread, action was taken against it. Thus, at a synod in 249, the Valesians were condemned, who not only castrated their own followers but also anyone who had the misfortune to fall into their power. And later, if the reports are correct, the popes themselves would have been required to be examined to see that they retained their genitals: on a special chair (a specimen of which still exists in the Louvre) with a horseshoe-shaped seat, very similar to one of the old birthing chairs, the cardinals paraded, secured themselves and announced: "testiculos habet et bene pendentes" ^[85].

CHAPTER 10

CHASTITY IN THE MIDDLE AND MODERN AGES

"On the contrary, we must hate the body with its vices, because it wants (...) to live according to the flesh."

FRANCIS OF ASSISI

"How the earth disgusts me when I look at the sky!"

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

"It disgusts me to use these happy people here only as a comparison."

TERESA DE ÁVILA

The whole of the Christian Middle Ages regarded as the highest ideal that existence hostile to the body and the instincts of the hysterical ascetics. For the medieval man, almost everything concerning sex is gravely sinful, and the pathologically chaste is holy. Pleasure is condemned and chastity elevated to Heaven. All the masochistic excesses of antiquity return, the chronic depressions and also the torrents of tears, the filth, the fasting, the vigils, the flagellation; and new monstrosities are added. It is true that, in fact, sexual prohibitions were never enforced; however, as G. R. Taylor writes, consciences were so burdened by them that they resulted in the most

various mental disorders. "It is no exaggeration to say that medieval Europe was rather like a great madhouse" [86].

The Church has always demanded mortification; Pope Innocent XI (from 1676 to 1689) strictly forbade any end to it, and the Synod of Issy condemned all contrary belief as "a mad heretical doctrine".

Preachers defame the body as a "pit of dung", a "vessel of putrefaction", "all full of filth and monstrosity". John of Avila - elevated in 1926 to the rank of doctor of the Church - teaches the

"despise the body": "consider it as a dunghill covered with snow, as something that causes you disgust as soon as you think of it". "And let us beware", the Franciscan rule commands, "of the wisdom of this world and the intelligence of the flesh; for the instinct of the flesh drags us vehemently to verbiage, but little to action (...) The Spirit of the Lord, on the contrary, wants the flesh to be mortified and despised, devalued, put off and treated affrontingly (...)" [87].

Pissintunicis or an image for the gods

So there were countless monks, not only St. Francis, who let their bodies rot, for example, by never bathing; among them St. Benedict of Aniane, renovator of the Benedictine convents in France and adviser to Louis the Pious. Of course, uncleanness was by no means limited to those whom a medieval chronicler once called, in fragrant style, "pissintunicis" (pissers of habits). Some of the most eminent princes of the Church did not bathe either: St. Bruno, Archbishop of Cologne, around the tenth century; Archbishop Adalbert of Bremen, in the eleventh century.

It was the system. And it was consistent. Whoever despised the body had to neglect it. An aspect also pointed out by Nietzsche: "The body is despised, hygiene rejected as sensual; the Church itself protects itself against cleanliness (the first Christian measure after the expulsion of the Moors was the closure of public baths, of which Cordoba alone had two hundred and seventy)". In the 20th century, the attitude towards bathing in public circles

The clerical system still has room for improvement, so much so that in 1968 it had to be stated that "the observance of hygiene is expressly not only permitted, but recommended".

Of course, there was never a shortage of clean monks. Especially after pollutions (and even more so after contact with a woman!), many of them flew into the first bath. The abbot Vandrilo, born in Verdun at the end of the 6th century, would get up immediately after a

"He would jump "full of pain into the river; even in winter, he would sing the psalms in the icy water and make the usual genuflections by kneeling on the bottom". A sight worthy of the gods... Or rather: of God! The holy bishops Wilfred of York and Adelmus of Sherborne, King Erik the Holy of Sweden and other saints also dived for prophylactic reasons, even in the coldest of times. Likewise, on one occasion, Bernard of Clairvaux, the "great physician and guide of souls", "the religious genius of his century" - whom, as Luther knew, "his breath smelled, stank so much that no one could stand near him, of course because of the penances" - ran to throw himself into a pond after he had been watching a woman with excessive complacency. Others regarded the woman as a grave mortgage, the world as a vale of tears and life as a burden; they celebrated sadness and shed tears in torrents. Benedict of Anianus is so blessed that he weeps whenever he wants to. Likewise, Saint Romuald (1027) - his greatest wish would have been to turn the world into "one hermitage" - could bawl at will during mass, in the sermon, from the top of a horse if he felt like it, and , at those times, his whole heart" melted "like wax": "a religious spirit of fire".

(...) of the category of that of the ancient Christians". And it seems that the same grace was granted to none other than Gregory VII, who learned his lesson (infra).

Later on, silence was also practised, which was related in no tangential way to the fear of sinning and was already in use among the ancient Indians and Chinese. Some hermits spoke only on Sundays; others spoke for a hundred days and not a day more; the Carthusians, the Camaldolese and

especially the Trappists kept such a strict silence that some of them went mad ^[88].

Fasting the old and the new way

Fasting continued intensively; in particular, according to Thomas Aquinas, all animal products, and especially eggs, were attributed a strong influence on sexual life. The virtuous Christians of hunger achieved records: in some cases it is claimed that they endured for fifteen or twenty years - or twenty-eight, like St. Lyduvina - without food. In the 19th century Domenica Lazzari and Louise Lateau still kept abstinence - with the exception of Holy Communion - for at least twelve years.

On the contrary, how generous the Church is today! Not only does it declare "pleasure of the palate" as a simple venial sin, as long as one does not want to turn the stomach "into a god", but even when it proclaims the obligation to fast, it states: "If on a fasting day someone has twice (consciously or unconsciously) sought complete satisfaction, he may no longer keep the fast on that day. So he may again eat his fill during the remainder of the day". If this is not progress! It is true that eating meat on Fridays is still forbidden, but there are a great many dispensations and, in addition, delicacies are tolerated en masse: eggs, milk, fish, frogs, turtle, snails, shellfish, oysters, crabs, and, by virtue of a supreme indulgence to The "old Reich and Austria" (since the Fascist popes, the weakness of the Vicars of Christ for the Germans is well known), meat broth every day except Good Friday ^[89].

Scourging a bad member well

On the threshold of the century, people again covered themselves with chains and breastplates, wore sackcloth with lead balls, spikes on their naked flesh, and

penitential garters with iron teeth to tear their legs.

At that time, to scourge or to be scourged became a real fashion. Three thousand lashes (or three thousand psalms) corresponded to a year of expiation. As a champion of this special way of saving souls, a certain Dominican of the monastery of Fontavellano is recorded, who, in addition to having been put in an iron armour for fifteen years, which earned him the title of Loricatus the Battleship, managed to absolve hundreds of years of atonement in a few weeks.

Scourging was introduced almost everywhere and promoted by the Church. If a discipline of fifty lashes is permitted and is good, in that case, concludes St. Peter Damian, Cardinal and Doctor of the Church, then of course a discipline of sixty, a hundred, two hundred strokes, why not a thousand, is all the more so. With astonishing logic, Damian describes it as irrational to censure the greater part of something the lesser part of which is considered good. As a further prophylaxis, the saint recommended fleeing from the gaze of women, frequent communion and drinking water, telling, in conclusion, how a monk tamed his member with a burning iron.

Dominic de Guzman, founder of the Dominican order (1215), was often beaten senseless. In fact, it seems that the Dominicans were beaten "as if they were dogs".

The Dominican Heinrich Seuse (died 1366), an advanced pupil of Master Eckhart, scourged himself daily and carried on his back for eight years, day and night, a cross studded with thirty nails. "Wherever he was, sitting or standing, it had the effect of having a hedgehog's skin on him; if someone unexpectedly brushed against him or slapped his garment, he was wounded (...) With this cross he endured for a long time two daily disciplines as follows: he struck his back with his fist so that the nails penetrated the flesh and got stuck in it, so that he had to pull them out with his garment". So, apparently, Seuse used to walk around with festering wounds that he never cleaned ^[90].

A person who is happy to live

The chastity of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga shines brightly in the eyes of the Lord. This Jesuit, who died at the age of twenty-three, whose attributes are a lily stalk, a cross, a whip and a skull, blushed with shame as soon as he was alone with his mother. During his first confession, he lost his senses; he said a Hail Mary on each step of a staircase, prayed before a crucifix, on his face, often for hours, and sobbed until room was damp. Apart from that, he fasted at least three days a week on bread and water and disciplined himself horribly at least three times, later even every day, apart from three times between day and night.

His shirts, which were shown to the Marquise, were all bloody from the punishments"! Yet, says a modern Jesuit, he was "a person who was happy to live, healthy"! Later, in the Age of Enlightenment, he was promoted to patron of studious youth. And even today, one of the "most progressive" moral theologians - for whom, by the way, the Aloysian ideal of "angelic innocence" has come to be

"to some extent debatable" - sees "in fact, something fascinating" in this curious saint.

The Belgian Jesuit Johannes Berchmanns, another canonised Jesuit who died very young (in 1621, at the age of twenty-two), fled not only from the gaze of women, but also from that of men. Therefore, he would crawl on the ground on his bare knees while praying, sighing, moaning and fervently kissing an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary to whom he was always giving the most beautiful names. And when it was time to venture into bed, she would first distribute the different parts of the bed among various saints, the guardians of her chastity, placing the crucified Christ at her feet. He also flagellated himself three or four times a week, and on feast days he wore a sackcloth. Why is it that these people, so happy to live, died so young? That clergyman who perished in Paris in 1727, at the age of twenty-seven, because of his penances (after which a wild convulsive epidemic broke out around his grave, with consumption of excrement, libation of rotten sores, and

similar), he will surely not have been the last victim of clerical ascetic madness.

In any case, in more recent times, there not have been many "canonised" who have not practised self-flagellation. And in the twentieth century, presumably it is not only the Jesuits who treat themselves to whips and steel spikes; after all, extreme mortification is, according to a saying of St. Francis de Sales, oats to make the ass go faster ⁽¹⁹¹⁾.

"Sometimes they seem to have lost their natural condition (...)".

Almost everything the Church gets its hands on is either ruined or it tries to ruin it. Almost everything that allows itself to be seduced is prepared for heaven and

"finished" for the world. Almost everything is the object of "mortification" (a magnificent term!); including the poor cloistered nuns. They, who often had to allow themselves to be punished by others, punished themselves, like the monks, even "for past sins, for those that would one day be committed, as well as for their fellows still alive, for the souls in purgatory, for the greater honour of God, and for a thousand other reasons".

And contemporary nuns continue to be possessed by the desire to flagellate themselves and to make the flesh mute. "Only pain makes life bearable" says Saint Marguerite Marie Alacoque; "suffer constantly and then die!" cries Saint Therese; "suffer constantly, but without dying" corrects Saint Marie Madeleine dei Pazzi. Mary of the Trinity "would like to break down in suffering". Not so long ago, Marie du Bourg acknowledged that, if pain were sold at the market, "she would rush there to buy it". Faced with this tradition of pure madness, a nun today is amazed by her companions: "sometimes they seem to have lost their natural condition. They seem to be somehow atrophied or impoverished, even in their human substance.

The Discalced Carmelites obediently endured discipline during the forty days of Lent, the season of Advent, and every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Fridays, in addition, they had to be flogged "for the

propagation of the faith, for their benefactors, for the souls in purgatory" and so on. They were charged additional sticks for a "medium fault", that is, if they sang or read differently than usual, if they chatted in chapter without permission or spoke in an inconvenient manner, and so on. And they were beaten even more for each "serious fault" [92].

Flagellantism, faecal joy and the worship of the Heart of Jesus

From the moment they entered, novices in many orders received a scourge, with the admonition to use it diligently. If one nun died, the others had to tear their flesh for the dead for weeks. Some were punished twice a day, others beat during the night. And some undoubtedly liked it, for the most diverse masochistic practices are based precisely on the transformation of pain into pleasure, of disgust into joy. Mysophilia was a unique form of Christian asceticism, a kind of purification ritual; by means of an extraordinary debasement, one hoped to be exempted from one's sins.

It will never be found out how many ascetics enjoyed torture and self-torture, to what extent this repression of pleasure has often resulted in pleasure; how many of the pious heroes of immersion may have been mere fetishists of cold, narcissists of epidermal eroticism. There are also those who, not being ascetics - but just like the great neurotics of Salvation and assailants of Heaven - throw themselves on brambles or pincushions or get themselves beaten and abused, who enjoy having burning horseshoes nailed to the soles of their feet, their phallus scorched, their foreskin cauterised or their belly-skin slit; and are content (or not) with it, without any more metaphysics.

St. Maria Magdalena dei Pazzi (1566-1607), a Carmelite from Florence, one of the "most eminent mystics of her order", would roll among thorns, let wax burn on her skin, get herself insulted, kicked in the face, whipped, and all this drove her to the most obvious and extreme rapture, and she it, as prioress, in the presence of all the others.

As long as it lasted, she moaned: "Enough, no more fan this flame that consumes me, this kind of death that I desire, which is linked to excessive pleasure and joy! "The classic example of a sexually perverted ascetic flagellant" (cf. *infra*). [French Salesian Marguerite Marie Alacoque (1647-1690) carved a monogram of Jesus into her breast with a knife and then, when the wound began to close too soon, she re-did it with a candle. Some seasons he drank only washing water, ate mouldy bread and rotten fruit, once licked a patient's sputum clean, and in his autobiography he describes the joy he felt when he filled his mouth with the excrement of a man suffering from diarrhoea. However, for such a display of fetishism he was granted permission to kiss the heart of an image of Jesus all night long while holding it in his own hands. Pope Pius IX (*Non possumus*) proclaimed her a saint in 1864! The order of the Heart of Jesus, the devotion to the Heart of Jesus and the feast of the Heart of Jesus go back to the "revelations" of this nun].

Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) chewed the filth from the rags of the poor, swallowing the mud and the lice. She was canonised in 1737 (cf. *infra*). St. Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) consumed the bath water of lepers. "I had never drunk it with such delight" she acknowledges, "A piece of scab from the lepers' wounds got stuck in my throat. Instead of spitting it out, I made a great effort to finish swallowing it, and I also succeeded. It was as if I had received communion, no more, no less. I will never be able to express the delight that came over me" (cf. *infra*).

The nun Catalina de Cardona fled from the Spanish court to a deserted place, living for eight years in a grotto and sleeping, even in winter, on the bare ground. She wore a penitential sackcloth, as well as covering her body with chains and treating herself, often for two or three hours, with the most varied instruments of torture. Finally he became ruminant. He bent over the earth and ate grass like an animal ^[93].

"(...) A most delicate manifestation of the Christian spirit".

This is medieval asceticism, "that most profound and delicate manifestation of the Christian spirit"; tears, blood, contempt for the body, for the libido, for the world, in short. Catholicism's greatest mystic, Teresa of Avila, whose "balanced personality" Catholics praise, even teaches us to "despise everything that has an end". For St. Teresa, "all life is full of deceit and falsehood", "there is nothing but lies", "nothing but filth", "everything earthly is disgusting": water, fields, weeping; "all this seems to me to be rubbish". And like else, these people also loathe themselves - or pretend to, at least - "And her self-hatred was greater than she could bear" it is said of St. Catherine of Genoa (cf. *infra*).

Because, obviously, ascetics also "sinned" constantly and were constantly tempted by sex, by "Satan": a "great painter", as Saint Teresa knew, who was often followed by the Prince of Hell, alone or with a large entourage (*infra*). "All the vices have been reawakened in me", says Angela of Foligno; "I would have preferred to burn myself on the gridiron rather than suffer such tortures". Catherine of Siena was attributed by whole legions of demons; she was disturbed in her cell and even in the church. In the same way. Catherine of Cardona suffered among the evil spirits, who would leap on her shoulders in the form of large sheepdogs or appear in the form of snakes... the old phallic symbol! About Micaela de Aguirre, a Spanish nun of the 17th century, her biographer tells:

"At night, while the maid of God was lying in her poor bed, the devil would come to her in the form of a well-dressed horse; climbing onto the bed, he would place his feet on Micaela and trample her with all the weight of his body and mistreat her (...)"

Since Christianity preached chastity ever since St. Paul, since ascetics were turned into idols and promoted to saints, to great models for everyone, the permanently propagated denial of nature eventually had to leave the cloisters and grottoes and catch the laity as well. It reached even princes and princesses, who, of course, were always the first ones to be

tried to keep it under control. Thus, for example, Emperor Henry III, one of the most powerful rulers of the Middle Ages, never wore the insignia of his dignity unless he had previously flagellated himself. Saint Louis did not neglect "discipline" during his weekly confession. Thus, Margaret of Hungary, Elizabeth of Thuringia - whom her own confessor was careful to slap on both cheeks - or the Polish Countess Hedwig, of whom Lorenzo Surio reports: "there was nothing left but bone under her dirty, pale skin, which, by incessant whippings, had acquired an entirely original colour, and was always covered with bruises and wounds". Even from the Christian side it was admitted: "what was once practised by some in an excess of zeal, is today accepted as a normal means of aspiring to sanctity". In any case, the incurable illogic of theological thinking is shown when an often surprisingly honest 19th century Catholic notes that "scourging or having oneself scourged as a penance has long since become a widespread (!) and world-wide custom", then adds that "the originally well-intentioned endeavour" finally degenerated "into unhealthy excesses and, spreading contagiously, into the debauchery of societies of scourgers or whipping men" ^[94]. As if sickness and degeneration were recent, as if a disease were only a disease from an epidemic, as if imbecility were only imbecility when it takes hold of men, as if the penitential rage behind the walls of the convents were fundamentally different from the delirium of the masses, as if the penitential rage behind the walls of the convents were fundamentally different from the delirium of the masses!

Death to the phallus and the art of the skopzi

Castration also flourished in the Contemporary Age, though only in Eastern Christianity, in the Russian sect of the Skopzi ("castrated"), the Orthodox, as Dostoevsky once called them. They rejected the Church and the State - which they regarded as the empire of the Antichrist - the popes and bishops - servants of Satan - and while they admitted Jesus only as the forerunner of the second and greatest son of

God, its founder Selivanov (who died in 1832), who had undergone a The "baptism of fire", consisting in the removal of his member by means of a red-hot iron. With his doctrine that the original sin is the sexual act and that only through the death of the phallus is humanity saved and the gates of Paradise opened to the faithful, he convinced thousands of people no less duped in their religiosity.

They created, principally, two classes, two degrees of "purity": that of the small seal (angelic rank), the lower class which "only" required the removal of the testicles, and that of the great seal or imperial seal, in which the member also fell as an offering to the law. The surgeons, virtuosos of my art, must have done outstanding work with the simplest of instruments: a knife and a napkin. The fanatics, however, dealt with the procedure on their own (sometimes with an axe). A red-hot iron would soak up the blood.

Among women there were also two degrees of devotion, a first and a second "purity": one, for example, had both nipples removed with irons and then: another, for example, had both breasts removed: or she had her sexual organs removed, castrating her clitoris or labia minora.

In order to augment their sect, the Skopzi generally only became emasculated after having children. Some of them also allowed their wives to have relations with other men, and the offspring that came from them were also castrated. In addition, they sent out teams of agents to buy proselytes and children. Since many Skopzi were well-to-do merchants, jewellers or money changers who usually spent all their wealth on acquiring new followers, even in overwhelming poverty, the sect prospered, but apparently deserters and traitors were ruthlessly persecuted, even abroad, and those who came out of curiosity to their convents were caught, tied to a cross and forcibly castrated.

Making a Christianity to the Holy Virgin

A skopiza who - in a prodigious way - became pregnant had to play the role of the Holy Virgin; her child was considered a child of God and had to die a martyr's death. On the eighth day after his birth they would cut out the child's heart, drink his blood as communion and transform his dried body into buns, which were used for the Paschal communion. "Among these barbarians, the virgin, who is declared a bogorodiza or mother of God, is usually greeted, from the moment of her consecration, with these words: 'Blessed art thou among women; thou shalt bring forth a saviour'. Then she is stripped naked, placed on an altar and indulged in an infamous worship with her naked body: fanatics throng to kiss it everywhere. It is requested that the Holy Spirit will be good enough to make a christmas to the holy virgin so that, in that year, the faithful may be allowed to receive communion from the sacred body". If the christmas came, they would cut it up again to consume it in communion, or they would sacrifice it to the same bogorodiza.

, even mutilation does not put an end to the instinct.

Luther, who had heard of the Waldensian whom castration only made more lustful, openly affirmed that the castrated had "greater desire and greater appetite than others, for desire and appetites do not disappear, only the capacity".

Catholic art

In the West, emasculation was only cultivated for artistic reasons, to avoid the change of voice of the singers in the chapels of princes and popes; it was, above all, an Italian custom, still very much in vogue in the 18th century. But if elsewhere infant limbs were also cut off to the greater honour of God, it was the land of the popes that supplied the whole of Europe with eunuch singers, with the village of Norica, in the papal state, appearing as an enclave of this bel canto industry. (Joseph Haydn himself, chorister in the Viennese St. Stephen's Cathedral,

could have been put before the razor and, as they said at the time, "sopranised" for the sake of "aesthetics". Only his father's energetic protest spared him).

The castrated continued to chant in the Sistine Chapel - erected by Pope Sixtus IV, an exceptional pimp, also builder of a brothel (infra) - for centuries, until about 1920! No less than thirty-two "Holy Fathers" (starting with Pius V, a former monk and inquisitor, who, in turn, ordered the death penalty for incest, procuring, abortion and adultery) had the same lack of scruples when it came to mutilating the young; "the latest, most blatant and most acerbic expression of a clerical desire for castration against the laity contemplated with sexual envy". But it was also an expression of an aversion to women, for by this procedure their presence in the choirs was avoided ^[95].

A sexual substitute for celibates gifted with fantasy, romantic or hysterical, as well as a means of compensation for the unhappy life of asceticism, in the course of time it became a mystical form of devotion, in which (forbidden) love for the other sex was "spiritualised" and "refined" and placed in the sphere of the supposedly Elevated, the Noble. The oppressed world of the instincts found an equivalent in the forced veneration of certain figures of the Christian Olympus. "One has to read the monks' ardent hymns to Mary and the nuns' even more ardent hymns to Jesus," writes the theologian Hans Hartmann, "to understand this in all its depth".

CHAPTER 11

THE MYSTICS MARIAN LOVE AND CHRISTIC EROTICISM

Oh, how often Aphrodite sets her seal on God's love!

FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

*There is only one interpretative key to the secret of the mystical
psyche: the sexological one.*

ERNEST BERGMANN^[96]

Mysticism is the almost touching - sometimes charming, from a literary point of view - attempt to breathe life into the mummy of metaphysics, an attempt that ranges from the subtlest spiritual tingle to the most strident hysterical intoxication; Forced auto-suggestion as a form of evidence of faith, as a religious stimulant of the soul, an aesthetic-psychological drama which - in its different representations - is known in late Bramanism, Buddhism, Chinese Taoism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism or Islam.

Greek religion was quick to use the concept of the "mystical" metaphorically, meaning - ironically or ironically - that which cannot be spoken about. It is the *sanctum silentium*, the *stille swág* en of the old German mystics, which serves as an appropriate and sublime "means of expression".

Of course, once expressed, it has often not been so sublime. And whatever the imprint of mysticism - more sensitive or more voluntaristic or philosophical - Knowledge always counts less than Emotion, and Ratio less than Rapture; God must always be verified spontaneously, must be felt and possessed, must be "thrown into his arms" as Mechthild of Magdeburg says, or "ardently embraced" as Zinzendorf says.

The mystic wants to be absorbed by "the Absolute" in the same way as the lover by the beloved. Voluptuous ecstasies and ecstasies here and there. Mysticism is not conceivable without eroticism, it is nothing less than its creature, a certainly haughty bastard that denies its origin and can only appear by means of the repression of instincts, that can only engender these visionary excesses and all this divine vertigo by means of the sublimation of instincts; mysticism is all those St. Vitus dances and super-spiritual masquerades of the faithful who, by letting the back room show, can only imagine their relationship to the metaphysical under the symbols of love and marriage.

The language of these misguided ecstasies is peppered with metaphors of intense carnality and their erotic components cannot be marginalised.

-The fact that no person is capable of "eliminating the sexual component from a relationship, or even from the relationship with divinity", a statement that is inapparently demonstrated by the mysticism of love, does not even minimise it. Ergo: God cannot be enjoyed without sex - but sex without God can! In any case, is the one who enjoys God, and does it always so ardently and fanatically, who unites with Him and believes himself betrothed or married to Him, anything more than the victim of a perverse fantasy, the scene of a *sui generis* sentimental spectacle?

Or is it a coincidence that the mystical surrogate of the men has most often been a woman, and that of the women a man? Why should the desire of the friars, so obsessive and ardent, be directed towards Mary, while that of the nuns, even more fiery, was directed towards the Lord Jesus? Why should this desire be expressed, in the one case, by a kiss on the breast of Our Lady, and in the other, by intercourse, sometimes barely concealed, with the Spiritual Spouse?

1. "CARITAS MARIAE URGET NOS".

We want to be slaves of love.

JOSEPH, BISHOP OF LEIRIA, in the
"Jubilee Holy Year of Salvation". 1933

In countless legends of the Middle Ages Mary appears exciting and enchanting, granting sensual as well as spiritual satisfactions, covering her lovers with milk, allowing herself to be wooed or caressed, forcing her devotees to abandon their brides and enter a convent.

It was precisely the most devout monks who transferred to the Blessed Virgin all the sexual feelings that were forbidden to them, making her their "bride" and having in her an ideal substitute for woman, a woman whom they avoided and despised, or at least had to avoid and despise. The frenzy of Marian love was not unlike the frenzy of "free love" of the time.

Long before the Cistercians, a suffocating mysticism raged in the late tenth and eleventh centuries at Cluny, whose well-known abbot Odilon threw himself to the ground every time the name of Mary was uttered. Hermann, a young Premonstratensian, lived in complete amorous intimacy with the Virgin in the monastery of Steinfeld. Something similar happened with the first abbot of the Cistercians, Robert of Molesme. Gregory VII and Peter Damian, celibacy fanatics and great misogynists, were also very devoted to Mary (*infra*).

Clerical intimacies went much further. Mary offered her breast to many of the faithful. This is how St. Dominic was represented, and under the image of the Dominican Alano de la Roche the following legend shone forth:

"Mary so reciprocated his love that, in the presence of the Son of God Himself, accompanied by many angels and chosen souls, she took Alan as her husband and gave him a kiss of eternal peace with her virginal mouth, and gave him a drink from her chaste breasts and presented him with a ring" (made with the

Mary's hair, according to Alano himself) "as a sign of marriage".

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux - whom Friedrich Schiller, unusually for him, elevated to the rank of "spiritual scoundrel" as a promoter of "the most stubborn monastic stupidity, being as he was himself a friar's mind that had nothing but mischief and hypocrisy" - came to enjoy the intimate favours of Our Lady as well. This "holy osculum

-The Song of Songs, which he interprets with a peculiar breadth of vision, "is so violent in its effects that the Bride immediately receives what flows from it, and her breasts swell and, as it were, overflow with milk", says St Bernard in his ninth homily on the Song of Songs. Bernard revels in the cause of his own "eloquence, sweet as honey" (the Master of the Marian Life paints him being sprinkled by the angels with milk from Mary's breasts). "Monstra te esse matrem" Bernardo prays before the image of the Mother of God, and the latter immediately uncovers her breast and suckles the thirsty prayant: "monstro me esse matrem".

Mary's womb also greatly fascinated the saints, as Jesus' circumcision and foreskin fascinated the nuns (infra). Already in his childhood, Bernard saw in a vision how the child Jesus emerged "ex utero matris virginis". And later he explains the phrase: "Jesus entered a house and a woman named Martha received him". He constantly slips from Martha's house to Mary's "womb".

Of course, this kind of Marian love, an obvious expression of sexual instinct masked by religious form, continued to flourish in the modern age, as the text of the *Future Perfect Wedding* illustrates: ", every delight of youth and every supposed pleasure of the bride and groom in flesh counts for less than nothing in the face of this heavenly joy (...) One can lie comforted at her breast and suckle to satiation, and her strength is accessible to us, to be consumed in a paradisiacal love play (...) In her company there is pure pleasure. Never ever could earthly bride be offered to a man with better clothes, more chaste, more honest and more pleasing than this virgin worthy of veneration (...) O pure pleasure, come and visit your own more often and make your emotions no longer lacking.

The "spiritual garden", where unsuspected joys with Jesus awaited them. "They have one inheritance, one house, one table, one bed and are truly one flesh", as St Bernard knew. And, even today, modern theology cannot tease the virgins with a

The "more expressive image" than that of the "very special love between the spouses" and the metaphor of the "heavenly betrothal", "the wedding with Christ in full truth and reality".

The Church also contributed with its rituals, in which, already in antiquity, it gave the consecration of the virgins the character of a marriage bond, with the presentation of veils, crowns and bridal rings; the dress of the vestals also had its origin in the ancient Roman wedding dress (supra). For Benedictine women, a wedding bed adorned with flowers awaits them at the end, with a crucifix, as a bridegroom, on the pillow, just as in some mystical cults - again the antecedent - the initiates had a wedding bed arranged for the visionary union with the divinity. And in medieval mysticism, the image of the marriage or love bed, "das minnekliche brutbette" as Tauler writes, is logically very popular. For *the sponsae Christi*, the *Christo copulatae*, not only gave their souls to the heavenly Bridegroom, but also their bodies, as the well-versed St. Jerome already knew (cf. supra).

[99]

Milk and jam for the Lord

The nuns, in a psychological displacement of the sexual and maternal instinct, play with the Baby Jesus, who has to be lying next to their beds, whom they feed and with whom they even feel pregnant.

Margareta Ebner (1291-1351), a Bavarian Dominican, sleeps beside Jesus, carved in wood in a cradle. One day she hears the voice of the Lord: "Do you love me more than anything else, for if you do not feed me I will depart from you". Obedient, Margareta places the figure on her bare breast, taking great pleasure in it. But Jesus does not give in, He does not stop pestering her, He even appears to her in her dreams, so that she converses with Him: "Why don't you

Will you be more modest and let me sleep? Then the child spoke: "I don't want to let you sleep, you have to hold me". So, anxious and happy, I took him out of the cradle and put him on my lap. He was a flesh and blood child. Then I said, "Kiss me; I want to forget that you have taken my peace of mind away from me like this! Then he hugged me and grabbed me by the neck and kissed me. Then I asked him to let me recognise the holy circumcision (...)". A subject that was of great concern to almost all the wives of God.

The young Jesus approached Elisabeth Becklin "very secretly" and sat down on a bench in front of her. "Then she jumped up full of longing, like a person beside herself, and drew Him to herself and took Him on her lap and sat down where He had been sitting and was complimenting Him, though she dared not kiss Him. Then she spoke with sincere love: "Oh, my heart, shall I dare to kiss you? And He said: "Yes, to your heart's desire, as much as you wish".

She also got as much as that bride of Jesus who sang to her "Beloved": "Ointment poured forth, untiring and complaisant bulldozer, who kindles me and consumes me with the kindest of fires. The delectations of my soul want to pour outwards or downwards (!), but the spirit sends everything upwards" [\[100\]](#).

Mechthild of Magdeburg or "on the bed of love".

In the 13th century, Mechthild of Magdeburg, who finally died, old and blind, in the Cistercian monastery of Helfta (near Eisleben), had also been kindled and consumed "in the bed of love". For decades she fought her libido with "sighs, weeping, prayers, fasting, vigils, scourging" and so on, before she reached the full enjoyment of God, the *fruitio Dei*, and visions took the place of penances. "For twenty years the flesh never let me rest, and I grew weary and sick, and in the end I was weakened by repentance and sorrow, and by holy anxiety and spiritual fatigue, and to this were added many severe natural diseases" - with which, moreover, she depicts the life and the way of the cross of many nuns. The repression worked so successfully on her that

many devoted copyists and translators have continued to summarise and reformulate his mystical legacy (in part - from a poetic point of view - in part from a poetic point of view).

- highlighted).

She hardly exaggerates the heading of the work when she says: "the contents of this book have been seen, heard and felt with all the members". For Mechthild had to love with all her limbs: "(...) you have to love and you have to love / and nothing else can be started"; she cannot To "refuse love no more", she had to "pour out love", and this began to happen to her very early on. "I, an unworthy sinner", she admits, "at the age of twelve, being alone, was kissed by the Holy Spirit, in a most blessed flow". And later it flows more and more frequently. Whether she sings:

"Love to flow, / sweet to water".

or:

"O God, who flowest in Thy love!"

Or if you feel like a "dry field" and beg:

"O most beloved Jesus Christ, send me now the sweet rain of Thy humanity."

Meanwhile, she constantly asserts that she wants to live and flow "immaculate" or "pure", which is symptomatic of the process of repression.

*Oh, my only Good, help me,
that I may immaculately flow in You!
Oh, Lord!
Love me intimately,
and love me often and long!
For the more often you love me, the purer I will be.
Remember how You can caress
the pure soul in Your lap.
Consecrate it, O Lord, in me at once.*

But it is not only she who is after the Lord; He also covets her, He is after her, He is after her, He is after her.

"" . "Lord, You are all the time sick with love for

me" He reveals. And He sweetly intones: "you must feel endless pain / in your body" apostrophising that it is His "pillow" or the "bed of love" or the "bed of love" or the "bed of love".

"stream of My ardour"; and it flows in its turn, and makes it flow again.
Panta rhei!

If I shine, you must burn, if I flow, you must gush.

The "lofty rock" (infra) wants to "live with her, as husband and wife" promises "a sweet kiss on the mouth" He insists to her: "grant that I may cool in you the ardour of My Divinity, the longing of My Humanity and the joy of the Holy Spirit!" Repeatedly, the Three Persons thus contend with the flowing Matilda, making her "delight" "very varied"; "at the hour of her receiving Our Lord" all three, fiercely, put their hand (or whatever it was) into play from on high: it was the energy of the Holy Trinity and the blessed heavenly fire so warm, in Mary.

It is only natural that Mechthild, having in mind such divine outpourings on - or in - Mary, should sigh:

O Lord, you pamper my caged dungeon too much.

And the divine Bridegroom replies:

*Beloved heart, my queen, what torments your impatient senses? If
I wound you to the depths, at once, with all my love I anoint you.*

So often. God "comforts her with all His power on the bed of love". One cannot but believe the modern interpreter when he states: "that Mechthild stands out so incomparably among the religious women of her time, she owes it to the gift of having found words about that which for others remained ineffable" ^[101].

Love in the "state of apparent death".

Some maidens literally loved until they lost their senses. This was the case with the nun Gerburga of Herkenheim, for whom the "sweetness of heaven" penetrated "into the interior of the body like an effervescent fountain of life" and she was seized by such ardour that she collapsed unconscious.

A companion writes of the Dominican Elisabeth von Weiler: "Her gaze was so lofty and so sifted with grace that she often lay there for one, two, three days, so that her outer senses could perceive nothing. On one occasion when she was lying in such a state of grace, a noblewoman came to the convent. As she did not want to believe that our sister had lost her senses through grace, she approached her and plunged a needle into her heels. But Elisabeth, because of her ardent love, felt nothing.

St Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), patron saint of the Dominican order and patron saint of Rome, also lay for hours in a "state of apparent death" and was eventually given the needle test by sceptical miracle addicts; but "the feeling of love" held "all her limbs".

Sometimes, lying in bed, Saint Catherine of Genoa - the swallower of dirt and lice - could not bear the burning. "All the water in the world," she cried, "could not refresh me in the least. And she threw herself on the ground: "love, love, I can't take it any more". A supernatural fire ("fuoco") consumed her; the cold water in which she put her hands suddenly began to boil, and even the glass became hot! She was also hit by sharp darts "of heavenly love". One of the wounds ("ferita") was so deep that she lost her speech and sight for three hours.

"He made hand gestures that implied that red pincers were squeezing his heart and other internal organs" ^[102].

The deep wound and the confessor

Like so many ecstatic women. Catherine had a certain weakness for her confessor. On one occasion she began to sniff at his hand: "a heavenly smell" she said,

"whose amenity could wake the dead". Catherine was unhappily married and when she met this confessor she was twenty-six years old. And just at the moment when "she knelt before him, she felt in her heart the wound of God's immeasurable love".

It was the famous wound that opened up for so many contemplatives, for example Madame Guyon (1648-1717). La Guyon, then nineteen years old, also felt the wound during the first *tête-a-tête* with her confessor, whom a "secret power" led to her; she felt "at that moment" exactly like Catherine, a deep wound that filled me with love and rapture, a wound so sweet that I wished it would never heal".

Saint Mary Magdalene dei Pazzi, addicted to scourging and laceration with thorns (*supra*), often stood motionless, "until the outpouring of love came and with it a new love penetrated her limbs". Often she would jump out of bed and grab a sister with the greatest frenzy: "come and run with me to call love". Then she would go bellowing like a maenad through the convent and scream:

"Love, love, love, love, ah, no more love, that's enough!

In the garden, reports her confessor Cepari, she tore "everything that fell into her hands", tore her clothes, summer or winter, because of "the great flame of heavenly love that consumed her" - which she sometimes extinguished in the well, pouring water "into her breasts". "She moved with incredible speed," testifies Cepari, who assures us that, being in the chapel choir on the feast of the Finding of the Cross on 3 May 1592, Magdalena jumped no less than nine metres ("amor vincit omnia") to grab hold of a crucifix. She then released the holy body, planted it between her breasts and offered it to the Lord for the nuns to kiss ^[103].

Mystic beast

Angela of Foligno, the one who drank the washing water of the lepers (*supra*), made it easier. She did not jump up and down towards Jesus, so no more

nine metres: he himself was following her, in love to his heart's content. "My sweet, my beloved daughter, my beloved, my temple!" he languished for her. "All your life, your food, your drink, your sleep, yes, all your life pleases me. I will do great things through you in the eyes of the people (...) Beloved daughter, my sweet wife, I love you so much!" "The Almighty God has provided you with much love, more than any other woman in this city. He has taken delight in you". Et cetera.

In order to be able to have such experiences, the first thing the "angelic" woman had to do was to get rid of her family, which she achieved with God's help, enjoying it "with murderous pleasure" (!). "At that time, by God's decision, my mother died, who was for me a great obstacle on the way to God. My husband also died, and in a short time all my children also died. And as I had begun to walk the way of blessedness, and had asked God to deliver me from them (!), their death was a great consolation to me, although I mourned for them" ^[104].

And now we come to a mystical beast of another kind, a sphinx, so to speak, in whom, apart from her crass lust for power and money, one is never quite sure whether she commemorates hypocrisy or hysteria or cynicism or all at once: Teresa of Avila, the greatest Catholic mystic... *ma bête noire*.

3. TERESA OF AVILA: "AND PLANT YOUR LOVE IN ME".

*So go ahead, my sisters! That in some we can already enjoy
Heaven on earth (...)*

SAINT TERESA^[105]

(...) Catholic from to toe.

NIGG, theologian^[106]

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) did not reap her particular delights - like Augustine and so many other saints - until her mature years. Until her forties she found "no joy in God" or in "His Majesty" as she often preferred to say: a more fitting treatment for the Almighty than the rude tuteau she endures from anyone else. Therese herself tells us that for twenty years she was a complete sinner, like Mary Magdalene, a "bad woman", "the worst of the worst", worthy "of the company of the infernal spirits". But then, almost as if in passing amidst this torrent of accusations, she notes that her misdeeds, even the most shameful, had not been "of such a nature that I found myself in mortal sin".

What a light falls on her, what a cloud of incense, what a refined staging! No wonder that the ecclesiastics themselves warned against her and accused her of extravagance and diabolical obsession, or that for two decades she could not find "any confessor who understood her". It is that the first one who succeeded in satisfying her was "a great devotee", but not only of the Virgin Mary, in particular "of her Conception", but also of "her Conception".

"Teresa treated this man in a way that was not at all platonic; she had been in a relationship with a woman from the same place", with whom she had had a non-platonic relationship for many years.

"very loving" - completely different -, cultivating "frequent reciprocal intercourse". In any case, the monk died only a year later; evidently he was not prepared for both these hardships.

However, Teresa's sufferings were even more atrocious than her vices: fevers, headaches, haemoptysis; as she carefully expresses, "as far as I can reach, I have almost never ceased to feel (...) some kind of pain". A cardiac faintness attacked her "with such extraordinary reluctance (...) that everyone (...) was frightened by it". Suddenly, and more and more, she would lose consciousness or be left in a state of

"which constantly bordered on unconsciousness". Is it surprising that they thought she would "become frantic"? On one occasion she writes: "The tomb that is to receive my corpse has been open in my convent for a day and a half now". In any, she was "paralysed" for "three years". Afterwards,

At first he could only crawl "on all fours". And for another "twenty years" he suffered "every morning from vomiting", which was usually repeated "at night before going to bed", "with much greater fatigue". "So I have to stimulate sleep with feathers or the like". She often howled. For God had also "blessed with the gift of tears". But then she feared she would go blind precisely because of this grace ^[107].

A lecherous demon grinds his teeth

Visions of all kinds then flock to this chastened nature, as joyfully as bees to the honeycomb. The scenes are repeated again and again: the open Heaven, the Throne, the Divinity, incomparably beautiful angels; the Saint recognises that "here is all that can be asked for". She contemplates St Clare, "Our Beloved Lady", "our father St Joseph" and, on many occasions, the Jesuits whom she so reveres: in Heaven, or even "accompanied by God", or "ascending to Heaven"... until, for pecuniary reasons, she declares them pawns of the Devil!

About the Devil: he pursues St Teresa, but she frightens him by means of the sign of the cross ("I did what I could") and by resorting to holy water, with increasingly satisfactory results. One day, Beelzebub tormented her "for five hours, with such cruel pains and such great interior and exterior restlessness that I thought I could no longer bear it". Even her spiritual sisters were upset.

On another occasion, Teresa saw next to her "an abominable little Moor, who gnashed his teeth like a condemned man" because he did not achieve what his evil spirit suggested to him. And that he attacked the saint severely, and the poor nuns, who saw their mother again in horrible convulsions, were probably quite upset again. "So I had to strike and struggle violently, with my whole body, with my head and with my arms, without being able to restrain myself".

Gradually becoming accustomed to God's parts

Nevertheless, the Lord penetrated without the slightest effort where the infernal band never reached. This was the case in the convent of Beas. At first, God merely placed a simple ring on the saint's finger, as a sign of commitment; then He showed Himself, but only *peu à peu*: first the hands, then the face, and finally the whole finger; she would not have "resisted" all at the same time. Instead, he enjoyed the divine parts piece by piece, so to speak.

Like many ordinary mortals, love also made the saint a poetess. Exultant, the greatest Catholic mystic takes up her lyre and sings:

*I have given and given
all, and so I have
changed, that my beloved
is for me and I am for my
beloved. When the sweet
hunter threw me down
and left me surrendered
In the arms of love my
soul fell.
A love to occupy, I pray
you, my God, my soul to
have you, to make my sweet
nest.
where it suits it best.*

The circumcision of Jesus, naturally, prompted Teresa to write a corresponding poem. And "on the feast of St. Mary Magdalene" she began to reflect "on the love I owed to Our Lord for what He had made me partaker of through this saint; and I was moved with a strong desire to imitate her" ^[108].

Showing the fig to the Lord

Ah, if only we knew what Teresa's "figa" meant, what it is, what it was... A real spur to fantasy, like that revelation she was privy to (at first hand!) about the Great Sinner, about whom she also kept discreet silence. How many speculations about the holy harlot Teresa would have cleared up; how many gossips and murmurings she could have put an end to! But no, that was the secret of this aficionado of the horizontal position of the synoptics; and there was the Teresian fig (Provençal "figa"; Latin "ficus"). In antiquity the fig and the fig tree had erotic significance. Popular etymology derived the verb to sin, "peccare" from the Hebrew "pag" (fig), and even today hunters name the female organ of the deer with the name of the fig leaf.

Be that as it may, "the banner of Christ" is now "hoisted on high", "the commander of the fortress" climbs, if one may so express it, "the highest tower", the trees begin "to fill with sap". To which he adds: "this comparison awakens in me a sweet feeling". He also notices "a fire in the depths of my interior" and a "jolt of love"; "a great sorrow and a penetrating pain" are "united to a great delight"... "a [other] real wound". However, the divine Bridegroom penetrates "to the marrow"; at certain moments, the shock increases so much "that it manifests itself in sobs" and the soul "is torn from certain tender words which, to all appearances, it cannot contain, such as 'O life of my life', 'O nourishment that sustains me'". And finally, she is "sprinkled with a balsam that penetrates her to the marrow, diffusing an exquisite and delicate odour" and "spurts of milk (...)" She is "engrossed" in His Majesty, "completely engrossed in God Himself". He is either in her or she is in Him. In any case, she feels him in such a way that "I could not at all doubt that, in that abyss, he was in me or I was in him". His Majesty often speaks to her afterwards: "You are now mine and I am yours". And she, or rather her soul - for this is the only one we are dealing with - is beside herself and cries out:

"plant love in me" ^[109].

Struck by the dart

Sometimes this soul is also "penetrated by a dart in its innermost heart and guts, in such a way that it no longer knows what it is like and what it wants. It recognises that it longs for God and that this dart seems to have been plunged into some poison (...)" And "poison", "sorrow" and "sorrow of love", everything is "so sweet that no pleasure is more delightful in this life". "Then, one can move neither arms nor feet (...) One can hardly take a breath any more; one can only heave a few sighs".

To this context belongs, of course, that well-known vision immortalised by Bernini in the Roman church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in such a "frighteningly allusive" - and therefore appropriate - manner, in which an angel repeatedly thrusts a long golden sword into Teresa's heart. This is how she describes the apparition - or, as Evelyn Underhill corrects her, "the real experience of the penetration" - which occurred around 1562: "I saw by my left side an angel in bodily form (...) He was not large, but small and very beautiful. His face was so illuminated that he seemed to me to be one of the most preminent angels, who seem to be enveloped in flames. He had to be one of those who are called cherubim (...) In his hands I saw a long golden dart, and on the iron tip there seemed to me to be some fire. It seemed to me as if, several times, he was plunging the dart deep into my heart, and when he pulled it out again, it seemed to me as if he was pulling out with it that intimate part of my heart. When he left me, I was completely on fire with fervent love for God. The pain of this wound was so great that it drew from me the said sighs of complaint; but also the delight caused by this unusual pain was so extreme that I could in no way ask to be spared from it, nor could I be satisfied with anything less than God.

That's enough: the long gold spear with a red-hot tip ("something from fire"), the extreme sweetness of the pain and the groans during the divine in-and-out of the enslavement; all that was missing was the "spiritual paste" of which an English mystic speaks, a metaphor "if somewhat coarse, wholly innocent" ([110]).

Frequent occurrences of spears and rapiers

Who can be surprised that Teresa receives the grace of the dart?
"very often", or that it declares that "something has attacked it"?

Something has "attacked" her. On numerous occasions she sees darts, spears, rapiers or "swords in the hands" of some parents. Tactfully she announces: "I think that meant that the parents would defend the faith.

For on another occasion, when my spirit was absorbed in prayer, I thought I was in a field where many were fighting among themselves, and among them I saw those friars who were fighting with great determination. Their faces were beautiful and on fire. Many were beaten and knocked down; others were killed. The scene seemed to me to be a battle against heretics.

Of course, there are similar visions that leave no room for doubt. "During the prayer I saw myself all alone in a large field; and all around me were people of every description, and they surrounded me. They all seemed to have weapons in their hands: spears, swords, daggers, and very long rapiers, and they were ready to attack me with them". But Christ, from heaven, reaches out his hand in time to protect her. "And so these people, though they wished it, could not harm me".

It is easy to understand why she often suffered this kind of tribulation and why she was exposed, "shortly afterwards, to an almost identical attack". But in this case, those who pestered her were not complete strangers: "I am speaking here of friends, relatives and, what is even more surprising, of very pious people. Under the impression that I was doing something good, I was then harassed in such a way that I no longer knew how to protect myself or what I should do.

Even when the devil her, Teresa notices - in addition to her
The "dreadful mouth", the contemplation of which "particularly" excites her - into something long and penetrating: "a great flame seemed to come out of his body, bright and shining and without shadow" ⁽¹¹¹⁾.

Uplift and dryness

Teresa's (spiritual) copulations - usually a "rapid and vigorous attack" - almost always left her "as if crushed". The next day, she still felt "a weary throbbing and pain in my whole body; and it was as if all my limbs were disjointed". "Oh, this sublime art of the Lord!" she sighs after having enjoyed it.

Thus vision after vision and ecstasy after ecstasy - "a glorious madness, a heavenly folly" - follow one after another; his pirouettes become more and more daring, he flies higher and higher, literally. For, according to the Lord's words ("I will that henceforth thou deal with angels and not with men", which was "fully accomplished"); this "exceedingly critical nature" attained, at least, a "presentiment of the angelic nature" (Nigg). Violating the laws of gravity, she would rise from the ground, in frequent mystical trances, and float, blissfully, in the air; sometimes for half an hour! Witnesses: the nuns and "society ladies" (Nigg). And, of course, she herself: "I was hardly in myself, so that I could see very clearly how she was lifted up".

It is true that the mystic doctor was surprisingly sceptical - not to say defamatory - about the miracles and raptures of others - mere "women's fainting spells" - "There are people", she says, "and I have known some myself, whose brains and imagination are so weak that they think they see in reality everything they think, and this is a very dangerous disposition". "As Your Grace knows, there are persons of such weak imagination - though not in our convents - that they imagine they see in reality everything that occurs to them; in which the Devil must have some part". Instead, through her he spoke "manifestly the Spirit of God".

However, he did not always speak. And then there was the sin of acedia, the *ennui spirituel*, the "deep sleep of the soul" as Cassian says, or the "dark night" to quote St. John of the Cross; that state of affliction which Mechthild of Magdeburg deplores in the following words:

"When the faithful wife wakes up, she thinks of her beloved, and if he is not with her, she weeps. And if she does not have him with her, she begins to weep; oh, how often this happens to her!

spiritually, to the bride of God!" It is this misfortune that made Arnulf Overland wail as mournfully as Mechthild herself:

"He put his divine arms around her and placed his fatherly hand on her breasts, looking deeply into her eyes. And how could he not kiss her!"

For eighteen years, Therese suffered "great dryness" and her "loneliness and dryness". "I was then in great dryness" and so on. Of course, she considers "this dryness a great mercy". For, in this way, the future divine outpouring will be even better. That is why "to explain certain matters of the spiritual life" Therese always returns to her

"preferred image": "the irrigation of the soul through a network of channels skilfully arranged by the Gardener". The Lord presents himself as "a sponge completely soaked with water". Therese is overwhelmed by the "springs" of the "Bridegroom" by the "fountain of holy water" that irrigates His "garden" and feels, in all its realism, how the "power of fire is only suffocated by water that increases its ardour". And water, then, flows, gushes, splashes, "just like fountains". "Love always boils and bubbles". And it always dries up again, which is terrible. But it also returns, "because water draws more water to itself" ^[112].

4. PREPUTIAL MYSTICISM IN THE MODERN AGE

*Sexological experience teaches that sexual repression makes
desire sick, perverts or arouses it.*

WILHELM REICH^[113]

Later, the unnatural element of Christian morality continued to bring forth all kinds of flowers of the mystique of courtship and ardor.

Angelus Silesius, the Silesian clerical cantor ("To me, says Christ, our hero!"), writes in 1657, in the preface of his well-known booklet *Holy Pleasure of Souls or Spiritual Eclogues of the Psyche in Love with*

God: "Soul in love! Here I give you the spiritual eclogues and amorous yearnings of the bride of Christ to her Bridegroom, with which you may indulge yourself at your pleasure and, in the deserts of this world, may sigh for Jesus, your Beloved, intimately and lovingly, like a chaste little lovebird". And what follows sounds like this:

*Ah, how sweet is Your taste
for him who can taste it! Ah, how
clean, pure and transparent is Thy
flow, Thy spring.
Ah, that every pleasure and
comfort flows from your peaceful
bosom.*

Church hymn books are overflowing with poems like "O Rosamunda, come and kiss me, "North star of souls in love".

"That I am in love, your judgement in love causes it". "Prince of the Heights, who promised me marriage" and the like.

A church poem (sung to the tune of "Jesus of my heart, my content") begins:

*Come, my dove, my pure pleasure,
Come, our bed is blooming.*

And it contains these verses:

*Fiery pleasure, O chaste bed, in
it my love finds me, (...) thou
canst of sweet marriage the yoke
between us dispose:
that's why you offer yourself, that's
why you penetrate, my spirit wants
you to go through it, and only your
game at last to suffer (...)*

In the Ingenious Book of Canticles of the early 18th century, the stanzas shine:

*I look for you in bed until morning,
hidden in the alcove of my heart:
I'll shut you up or I'll call you, I'll walk through the crowd
and they see me pursuing you, Jesus, out of love.
I have him, I hold him, and I don't want to lose
him, I want him to embrace me, I want to
embrace him, I want to bring him into the
mother's bedchamber, so that I may enjoy all
his mercies.*

Many other "edifying writings" of this time radiate the same spiritual lullaby:

*My love, my treasure, Bridegroom, I lie in your lap, I
penetrate your heart, you will never leave me; I want to be
pregnant with you (...)*

And so many others.

"Further in, further in".

The (mainly Lutheran) Moravian Brethren, founded in the 18th century by Nikolaus Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf, intensified their faith by means of somewhat cheesy metaphors of obvious origin. In pietistic circles, the identification of the wound in the side of the Crucified One, the so-called "little hole in the side", with the female sexual organ was a prominent feature, an idea which had its subsequent literary application.

*Further in, further in, further in, to the side
a little bird that has just arrived to sing
exultantly "pleurae gloria" joins in.
and in the sweet wound can be
accommodated. It is attracted by the
primordial magnet,
in a tender rapture stand upright and
there is no greater good for him in his
esteem
than that beloved body to which it is attached.*

The wound in the side of Jesus was turned into a "wounded bunion",
"We read: "it slips into little hole in the side", "it rummages inside", "it
gnaws", "it licks it".

*Ay, to the hollow of the
spear bring thy mouth
nearer,
that kissed, kissed must be (...)*

The phallus is even extolled as the "most secret member" of the
"conjugal ointments" ^[114].

Preputial problems

If a pope was going on the pilgrimage of Abraham's foreskin in 1728 no less, it should come as no surprise that the foreskin of Jesus has moved devout Christians so deeply.

A long list of church fathers were tormented by the fate of this foreskin, which God must have lost on the eighth day of his earthly life.

Had it rotted away? Had it become too small or had it miraculously grown? Did the Lord make Himself a new one? Did He have it at the Last Supper, when He turned the bread into His body? Does it have a foreskin, now in , and is it adequate to His greatness? What is the relationship between His

Does divinity also extend to the foreskin, and what about the relic, can it be authentic, should it be worshipped like other relics, or simply venerated?

And finally: why are there so many foreskins of Jesus? The monograph written by the former Dominican A. V. Müller entitled *The Sacred Foreskin of Christ* (1907) lists at least thirteen places that boast of possessing the foreskin of Jesus.

authentic" divine foreskin: the Lateran and those of Charroux (near Poitiers), Antwerp, Paris, Bruges, Bologna, Besançon, Nancy, Metz, Le Puy, Conques, Hildesheim, Calcala, and "probably some others". Le Puy, Conques, Hildesheim, Calcala, and "probably some others". The precious possession was brought to Rome by Charlemagne, to whom it had been given by an angel.

Over time, a full-fledged preputial cult developed. In 1427, a Brotherhood of the Holy Foreskin was founded. Many people, pregnant women, made pilgrimages to visit the skin preserved at Charroux, which was said to have a beneficial effect on the course of pregnancy in the time of Pierre Bayle, Voltaire and Goethe. The piece preserved in Antwerp had its own chaplains. Every week a high mass was celebrated there in honour of the holy foreskin, and once a year it was carried "in triumph" through the streets. Although it was small and invisible, the favours it bestowed must have been great...^[115].

Jesus' foreskin as an engagement ring

The Jesuit Salmerón suggestively exalts the invocation of Jesus' foreskin as an engagement ring for his wives. "In the mystery of circumcision, Jesus sends his wives (as a maiden considered a saint has written) the flesh ring of his most precious foreskin. It is not hard; reddened with sardonyx, it bears the inscription "for the blood shed". It also bears another inscription recalling love, that is, the name of Jesus. The maker of this ring is the Holy Spirit, his workshop is the most pure womb of Mary (...) The ring is soft and if you put it on the finger of your heart, it will transform that heart of stone into a compassionate heart (of flesh) (...) The ring is resplendent and red because it turns us into a compassionate heart (...) The ring is red and resplendent because it turns us into a compassionate heart (...).

capable of shedding our blood and resisting sin, and because it makes us pure and godly.

If a whole legion of theologians pondered the dubious whereabouts of the relic, how could the circle of maidens subjected to these preputial ecstasies not be greater and more fanatical? St. Catherine of Siena, who was capable of rolling on the ground screaming, begging for the "embraces" of her

The "sweetest and most beloved young man", Jesus, wore on his finger the (invisible) foreskin of Christ, which he himself had given her. According to Catherine's confessor, she often told him, very shyly, that she saw the ring constantly, that "there was not a single moment when she did not notice it", and when Catherine's own finger became a relic,

"Various pious people" who prayed before him also observed the ring, although it was invisible to the rest. Still in 1874, the same grace was granted to two stigmatised young women, Célestine Fenouil and Marie Julie Jahenny; fourteen men saw the ring worn by the latter swell and turn "red under the skin". Their bishop was "completely enthusiastic" ^[116].

The Blannbekin's preputial menu

But what is all this compared with the preputial experience of Agnes Blannbekin, a nun who died in Vienna in 1715, whose The "revelations" were documented in 1731 by the Austrian Benedictine Pez.

Almost from adolescence, reports Father Pez, Blannbekin had missed that part that Jesus had lost: the unreachable skin of the Lord's penis. More specifically, "whenever the feast of the Circumcision came around" she used to "mourn the shedding of blood that Christ had deigned to suffer from the very beginning of his childhood, which she did with intimate and most sincere compassion".

And it was precisely on one of these feasts that, just after communion, Agnes felt the foreskin on her tongue. "While she was weeping and feeling sorry for Christ," the well-informed Pez tells us, "she began to

And there it was! Suddenly, he felt a little skin, like the shell of an egg, of an utterly superlative sweetness, and he swallowed it. No sooner had he swallowed it than he felt the sweet little skin on his tongue again, and once more he swallowed it. And this he could do a hundred times... And it was revealed to him that the Foreskin had risen with the Lord on the day of the Resurrection. So great was the sweetness when Agnes swallowed the skin, that she felt a sweet transformation in all her limbs".

The libidinous basis of all this amorous circus with Jesus and the Virgin, foreskins and nipples, phalluses and mother's milk, could it be more obvious? Leaving aside the purely literary aspect, there is no significant difference between "authentic" and "inauthentic" mysticism, between high and low mysticism, between mysticism and mysticism. In everything that is supernatural, nature always appears; sexuality appears in the "spirituality", eros in agape, different in form, it is true, but not in substance. If someone starts screaming while rolling on the floor or masturbating with a crucifix, it is nothing more than a simple substitute for materialised repressed instinct.

Therese Neumann and the end of the troubadours

The most recent practitioners of mysticism in the Church are disconsolately sober and inexpressive, at least verbally. For the age of the love of Jesus, as understood by the most notable spirits of the Middle Ages, has passed.

Thus, for example, according to Chaplain Fahsel, the performances of Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth (died 1962), and especially her mimicry, still had an effect "as intense and wonderful as I have ever seen among the best actresses" (very good!), but her expressions were of a disconcerting laconicism. Her chatty Spanish namesake would have needed whole volumes for the same thing that Therese explains with extreme sobriety: "Oh, I can no longer see, I can no longer hear, I can no longer think and I can no longer act".

In line with the growing degree of enlightenment and the generalisation of objectivism, in short, in line with a way of life determined by more rational criteria, mystics and mystifiers are dying out. Hysteria is losing ground in all Western countries and the affective world is better integrated. The fanatic's complaint is understandable: "how different from today's love of eternal wisdom and Marian sentiment were four hundred years ago, in the days of Catholic Germany! In those days, when the frost of a so-called Reformation had not yet destroyed for ever that most precious flower (!) of the German people, the delicate medieval mysticism, consecrated to Christ and Mary! But for ever? No, I firmly hope not!" And here it is said in bold type: "When the winter of Protestantism has passed, when all those who today protest against Jesus, Mary and the Church have drowned in their own blood (!), when the ideas of Protestantism, liberalism and socialism have annihilated each other in a life-and-death struggle (!), then, yes, then, a Catholic springtime of medieval mysticism in honour of Christ and Mary will bloom again among our people" ^[117].

However, apart from the fact that among these people, flourishing times and bloodshed are always synonymous, in the past the religious did not content themselves with devotional substitutes or with mystical raptures and outpourings. However much Mary's breasts overflowed with milk, however sweet the Lord's foreskin, however much the ecstasies kissed, licked, titillated and exhausted themselves, or anointed open wounds and glued, stuffed and stuffed them with the first thing that came into their heads, however much they made themselves love until they fainted or were lifted up into the air... in general, their preferences were for more profane forms of love.

CHAPTER 12

DE LA CRONIQUE 3CANDALEU3E DE LOS MONJES

*Those Augean stables which call themselves the Church of Christ
and which are nothing more than a brothel of the Antichrist (...)*

KONRAD WALDHAÜSER,
Augustinian canon (14th century)

*Monks should be the salt of the earth; but they have seasoned it
with pride and lust, with a wantonness that can no longer be
justified.*

GEILER VON KAYSERBERG, magisterial (15th century)

*On the contrary, there are so few who walk the path of monastic
perfection that a friar or a nun who wants to start seriously in
their vocation must fear their own companions in the convent
more than all the spirits of Hell put together.*

SANTA TERESA DE ÁVILA (16th century)

*No brother or monk or priest should cross the threshold of your
room; avoid them, for there is no worse plague (...) Mystics and
roguish friars, who should be chaste, are day and night in heat;
they go about in public with harlots (pellicibus) or, in secret, with
boys and married women (...) many fornicate with cattle.*

(ineunt pecudes), and the countryside and forests are filled with opprobrium and every city is a brothel.

P. A. MANZOLLI,
handed over to the tribunal of the Inquisition

Since ancient times, convents have been visited by all kinds of people, often not for religious reasons.

Even in ancient times, entering a convent was as unwilling a decision as entering a factory is today. In the Middle Ages, the nobility made some of their sons take the habit to secure their future or because they were very ugly. "If a nobleman's son is cross-eyed, lame, cretinous, crippled or mutilated," says the barefoot Pauli, "we already have a nun or a friar, as if God had not justly preferred anything more beautiful". - as is still sometimes the case today - people left the world because of a disappointment in love, or for fear of a marriage they hated; and occasionally because of a crime, because convents had the right of asylum ^[118].

A murmur of psalms?

Habit-taking has always been a means to live and love more easily. Not everyone was born to "muttering psalms and repeating them out of order until boredom sets in", as the theologian Peter of Blois wrote in 1185.

St. Augustine, despite his praise of monks, already taught, however, that "he knew no worse people than those who end up in monasteries". Salvianus, another Church Father, complained in the 5th century of those who "give themselves up to the vices of the world under the cloak of an order".

In the 6th century, the Briton Gildas writes: "They teach the people, they give them the worst examples by showing them how to practice vices and immorality (...)" At the beginning of the Middle Ages, Bede testifies that "many men choose the monastic life just to be free from all

the obligations of their state and to be able to enjoy their vices without hindrance. These so-called monks not only do not fulfil the vow of chastity, but even go so far as to abuse the virgins who have taken the same vow".

The same thing happened in all the regions infested by Roman dogmatics and hypocrisy. In the early Middle Ages, the Cluniac abbot Peter the Venerable, later canonised, tells us that no matter how hard he searched almost everywhere in Europe, he saw nothing but bald patches and habits instead of monks. In the late Middle Ages, Nicolas de Clemanges, personal secretary to Pope Benedict XIII, acknowledges that the friars were just the opposite of what they should be, for cell and convent, reading and prayer, rule and religion, were to them the most abhorrent things there were. At the beginning of the Modern Age, Giordano Bruno spoke of "filthy monasticism", generalising the epithet. And Voltaire went so far as to say that "monks who have corrupted people are everywhere" ^[119].

Women: "(...) neither in nor out of the convent".

Of course, the Church took every conceivable precautionary measure. Already in the time of Pachomius, women were "neither to enter nor leave the convent", as a modern Catholic writes. If a woman spoke to monks as they passed by, "the eldest (...) had to answer her with his eyes closed". The Benedictines were also governed by strict enclosure. The Cluniacs did not allow women to settle even in the vicinity of their monasteries - within a circle of two miles. Franciscans, as stated in the second rule of the Order, were to "beware of them and none should converse with them or simply walk with them or eat from the same dish at table". And, in a third rule, St Francis forbade "energetically all the brothers to enter into suspicious relations or consultations with women and to enter female convents". "In order not to give the devil any occasion", the Synod of Paris ruled in 1212, "doors that arouse suspicion, the various parts of the abbeys, the priories and all the rooms of the nuns must be barred by order of the bishops". But the best

system of vigilance was always to make the monks go to confession constantly: in the early Irish monasteries, no less than twice a day.

Offences were severely punished. Thus, the penitential books of the early Middle Ages stipulated a penance of three years for a monk who slept with a girl; if he slept with a nun, seven years; if he committed adultery, ten years of penance, six of them on bread and water; if the relationship was incestuous, twelve years, six of them on bread and water. If two religious married, Pope Siricius, in the first decretals that have come down to us, already demanded as expiation that they be "locked up in their rooms" in perpetuity (!), which was, in principle, the usual penalty for centuries. On appeal, Pope Zacharias - known "above all for his mercy" - ordered in 747 that monks and nuns who had broken their vows should be thrown into a dungeon and remain there, doing penance, until their death ^[120].

"And so they fed the flesh with cravings."

But all precautions, punishments and beatings were useless; the debauchery of the friars was so proverbial (*infra*) and the refinement of their immorality so extreme that some knights put on the habit before going on an adventure.

Moreover, the isolation of the convents, the protection of enclosure and idleness actually encouraged debauchery. In the churches, people danced and sang ditties. The taverns lived off the monks, companions of jesters and prostitutes.

In Jutland, religious were expelled or banished for life because of their debauchery; in Halle, young girls were being shagged in a conveniently secluded area of the monastery; in Magdeburg, mendicant monks were benefiting from women called Martas. In Strasbourg, the Dominicans, in civilian clothes, danced and fornicated with the nuns of Saint Marx, Saint Catherine and Saint Nicholas. At

In Salamanca, the Discalced Carmelites "went from one woman to another". In Farfa, near Rome, the Benedictines lived in public amances. In a convent in the archdiocese of Arlas, the remaining ascetics lived with women as if in a brothel. And it was known to all the neighbours that the religious of the archdiocese of Narbonne had virgins (focaries); among them, some women they had taken from their husbands.

To convince the women more easily, the fathers told them that sleeping with a friar in the absence of the husband was a means of preventing various diseases. They often extorted sexual favours from them by claiming that the sin with them was much lighter, a hundred times less than with a stranger. Apparently, in the region of the Calmuku, women preferred to fornicate with monks for religious reasons. Apparently, they were led to believe that they would then share in their sanctity.

The Oxford theologian John Wyclif (1320-1384) gives us a plastic picture of this spiritual life: "the perdition and licence in sin are so great", he writes, "that there were priests and monks (...) who killed the maidens who refused to cohabit with them. I do not mention their sodomy, which went beyond measure (...) Under their hoods, habits and cassocks, they seduced their young women (juvenculas), sometimes after the latter had already had their hair shaved off (...) After hearing their confessions, the mendicant monks abused the wives of nobles, merchants and peasants, while their husbands were at war, in business or in their fields (...) The prelates possessed nuns and widows. And so they fed the flesh with cravings".

Nevertheless, abbots like Bemharius of the monastery of Hersfeid often "surpassed all with the worst examples". They had children by the score: Abbot Clairembald of St Augustine's, Canterbury, had seventeen in one village alone; or they mated with their closest relatives, like the abbot of Nervesa, Brandolinus Waldemarinus, who had his brother murdered and slept with his sister.

As late as the end of the 18th century, the superiors of some monasteries still -like Abbot Trauttmannsdorff of Tepl in Bohemia - did not set foot in the convent or the choir for years and came to church usually only on the great festivals, but gave splendid parties and dances at the

monastery, served by lackeys in glittering liveries, squandering large estates.

The same can be said of mendicant orders such as the Irish Franciscans, the so-called Hibernians of Prague. In their guardian's cell they danced and sang until midnight; they feasted in the sacristy by the high altar, and while the elder brothers brutally beat the young men, the fathers cavorted with the women among the vines^[121].

In the service of Our Heavenly Lady Mary alone

The knights of the Teutonic Order also showed splendid vitality. For just as their love of their fellow man did not prevent them from exterminating half of Eastern Europe, so their *votum castitatis*, a life "only in the service of Our Heavenly Lady Mary" did not prevent them from fucking anything that had a vagina. Married women, virgins, girls and, as we may suspect not without reason, even female animals. In the Marienburg enclave, husbands hardly left their homes at night for fear that their wives would be dragged into the fortress and abused. For a long time, part of the castle's esplanade continued to be known as the "Maidens' Ground", a reminder of the sexual passions of the spiritual knights.

"As a result of the investigation into the Order's house in Marienburg, it has been proven that maidens and married women were systematically seduced under the guise of confessions, and that chaplains of the Order went so far as to abduct nine-year-old girls.

Sighing for the brothers and for the animals

On the other hand, the frequent difficulties in maintaining heterosexual relations must have pushed many monks into homosexuality or other types of sexual contacts.

It is true that every conceivable precaution was taken against this. Already in the earliest monasticism no monk was allowed to talk to another monk in the dark, nor to hold his hand, wash, soap or tonsure him; they even had to keep a little distance between them, whether they were standing or walking. Nor were they to "ride two together on the back of an unmounted donkey". It was preferred that the monks did not sleep in individual cells. In the pavilion, each had to remain dressed in his own bed, usually an older one between two young ones, and the dormitory had to be lit all night until dawn, and a small group kept watch in turn. But however thorough the spying work was, monasteries, like prisons, were always centres of homosexual relations, relations which the monks were the first to spread.

In ancient times it happened more openly and entire religious communities were destroyed by pederasty. Nowadays, a certain discretion is maintained. An anonymous thirty-five-year-old confesses:

"The homoerotic inclination was reinforced in me in the purely male world of the convent school". Our informant initiated some boys "into sexuality, individually or in small groups", through certain "sexual acts". But he was "afraid of being discovered" so, "with one exception, he did not usually repeat. The exception was a young man with whom I had a full sexual relationship on several occasions". Another friar, a university professor: "Desire attracted me to some friends and to a homosexual relationship with them (...) No one could offer me anything else". A third one: "because we were absolutely separated from girls in the boarding school, this inclination developed exclusively and has continued to exist in me to this day".

The monks even fornicated with beings who are not exactly looked down upon in Christianity. Thus, when, at the beginning of the 9th century, because of continuing scandals, mixed monasteries were abolished in Eastern Europe (where both sexes aspired to Heaven separately, but under the same roof), Abbot Plato, with admirable consistency, also expelled all female animals from his monastery area. Even St.

Francis, the friend of animals, was obliged in his second rule to forbid all brothers, "both clerics and laymen, to keep an animal, either themselves or in the house of others or by any other means". And in the 14th century the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Conrad of Jungingen, again forbade "any kind of female animal in the house of the Order in Marienburg" ^[122].

Dispensing grants with the whip

A peculiar attempt at sexual satisfaction was corporal punishment, which had always been practised in convents and which, curiously enough, served, among other things, to atone for sexual sins. Because what the punisher does at the desire of the punished, what he calls order, discipline, morality or whatever, often only aims, in reality, to obtain pleasure, to sadistically calm one's libido, which often leads the one being spanked to ejaculation (or in women, to orgasm). Some educators enjoy "spanking" their pupils so much that they are no longer able to have sexual intercourse.

In fact, the enjoyment was sometimes reciprocal; for passive flogging, especially among young men, causes erection of the penis or clitoris, and sometimes, in the midst of a flogging of the buttocks, ejaculation, as the Talmud already knew.

Applying nettles, as was common among Christian penitents - many convents planted them for this purpose - was, since antiquity, an aphrodisiacal remedy. French women also long masturbated with nettles and, as late as the 18th century, whipping brothels were always stocked with freshly cut nettles for sadomasochistic practices.

A medieval woodcut shows an abbess whipping a bishop's bare bottom with a birch rod, with evident complacency on both sides. In the mixed monastery of Fontevault, whose jurisdiction was in the hands of an abbess, the sisters ruled and the monks served, and each nun could whip a monk on the back,

on the buttocks or genitals, at her complete discretion. If the monk complained, the abbess would spank him again. But severity was never excessive and friars and nuns were disciplined together, with the confessor and abbess acting as "dispensers of mercy".

"Disciplining" women, including aristocrats, became a society game, especially among the Jesuits. Since, according to the statutes, it was a duty to "imitate the purity of the angels by radiant cleanliness of body and spirit", they not only whipped their pupils, but also the girls who went to confession, so that they could see them naked. Father Gersen S.J. became addicted to this practice, to the extent that he used to attack young village girls when they were working in the fields. The chronicle of the Order, versified in Latin, reports: "*Pater Gersen, virgines suas nudas caedebat flagris in agris. O quale speculum ac spectaculum, videre virgunculas rimas imas*".

In Holland, the Jesuits founded a sisterhood, formed among the rich and noble women, whose members had themselves whipped once a week. However, they did not receive the "penance" on the bare back, the discipline *secundum supra*; probably out of consideration, they were given the "Spanish discipline" or disciplina *secundum sub* - much more popular but much debated - consisting of whippings on the genitals, legs, thighs and buttocks. This must have been common among women and young girls; presumably it provoked some very natural lubricious movements in them. Dutch ladies took great pleasure in this type of punishment at the time and encouraged parents to "to continue his paternal discipline".

In Spain, corporal penances of women after confession were commonplace. The Jesuits used them to delight court ladies, foreign princesses or the wives and daughters of ministers, who received them naked in the queen's antechamber. "I have heard from eminent Spaniards", writes G. Frusta in the 19th century, "that the Jesuits and the Dominicans, who as confessors became assiduous and almost indispensable visitors to every house that was a little distinguished, practised a multitude of things like those mentioned, and that, warned, they attended, sometimes hidden and sometimes not, the

prescribed disciplines, in particular in convents where rebellious or frivolous women, girls in love and others such as these often locked up (which is still the case today). When the lady was particularly attractive, they directed the execution themselves" ^[123].

In Eastern Europe, orgies at the foot of the altar

Russian monasteries also paid homage to flagellantism well into the 19th century. Among the best known were the Ivanovsky convents and the convents of virgins in Moscow, where, regardless of age, "they knew how to combine religion and eroticism, mysticism and delight in a marvellous combination".

Naturally, Russian and Western nuns were generally subjected to identical situations. Thus, for example, Tsar Ivan III had to decree around 1503 "that monks and nuns should never live together, but that the monasteries of men and women should be separate". And Ivan IV, who curiously enough instituted a lay court to monitor the morals of priests, noted in 1552: "The monks keep servants and are so shameless that they bring whores to the monastery to squander the monastery's goods on vice and indulge in general lust (...) Finally - and this is the most deplorable thing, which brings divine wrath, war, famine and pestilence upon a people - they also indulge in sodomy".

In the 18th century - when a German traveller from Russia reports that "the chief occupation of Russian priests and nuns is trade in superstition, crime and immorality" - the devout Tsarina Elizabeth deliberately chose the monasteries as her residences of passage and there, with cynical religious outbursts that must have set an example for most of the clergy, she promoted veritable apotheoses of the flesh, with cynical religious outbursts that must have served as an example to most of the clergy, she promoted veritable apotheoses of the flesh, for which her confessor Dubiansky - the "most important" person at Court - had to absolve her from time to time, on the spot. The historian who undertakes the task of faithfully depicting these religious and erotic farces, which were given over to the stage

one after the other at a frenzied pace, he looks like a faithful copyist of a Sade's work. As in the most demented scenes described by this diabolical genius, we see depicted in the monasteries of Elizabeth's Russia the most terrible and bloody erotic dramas. Orgies are held at the foot of the altars, offerings are made to the most refined lust, with sacred images in their hands. Gluttony and excess spread contagious diseases throughout the Russian state, ecclesiastical and monastic. An archimandrite (archbishop) "rapes a girl in the middle of the street"... and nothing happens to her at all [124].

As for the nuns - who, in Russia at that time, did not hide either their lovers or their children, whom they raised themselves and who usually became nuns and monks in turn - they did not lag behind the friars *in puncto sexti*.

CHAPTER 13

THE NUNS

I don't know whether it would be better for a daughter to enter such a convent or a women's home. Why? Because in a convent she is a whore (...)

GEILER VON KAYSERBERG, masterly^[125]

Today, to impose the novice's veil on a girl means handing her over to prostitution; nothing more, nothing less.

NICOLAS DE CLEMANGES,
theologian and rector of the University of Paris^[126]

Spiritual head and worldly belly is what a nun needs today.

Medieval proverb

The danger of eunuchs and confessors

Like many men, girls and women often entered an order against their will.

The poorer nobles were the ones who pushed their daughters to join:

*Note: when a nobleman
cannot marry off his
daughter and has no
dowry money,
to the convent you will see her enter,*

writes Thomas Murner, a Franciscan and rival of Luther. Secondly, the female surplus of the bourgeoisie disembarked there. Sometimes daughters of illegitimate origin, even of religious people, disappeared into the houses of devotion, as happened, for example, at Shaftesbury Abbey, to a daughter of Cardinal Wolsey (founder of Christ Church College, Oxford) in the 16th century. "God curse him who made me a nun (...)" was sung throughout Germany in the mid-14th century.

It is true that a great many precautions were taken to ensure the protection of the most sacred things of the sisters. Chrysostom, who already saw how, on the one hand, women consecrated to God led "a life of angels" but, on the other, "there were also" "thousands of wicked women" among "these saints", orders: "She may not go out unnecessarily or too often (...). But whoever orders her to be constantly in the convent must deprive her of any excuse to go out, provide her with what she needs or give her a servant (!) to take care of what is necessary. He must also exempt her from funerals and night masses (...) These maidens must be forbidden all occasions to go out".

Augustine, in his Customs of the Catholic Church, written in 388, wanted to see the nuns "as far away as possible" from the monks, and "bound to them only by Christian love and eagerness for virtue". Young men, he reports, had no access to them, and even "very trustworthy old men" did not go beyond the visiting rooms. However, since the nuns needed priests for masses, Emperor Justinian authorised them as long as they were old men... or eunuchs. In some female convents, the doctor, unless he was very old, also had to be a eunuch. But even castrates were distrusted. Thus, Saint Paula (supra) ordered: "the nuns must flee from men, and no less from castrated men".

In the West, at the beginning of the 6th century, Caesarius of Arles, author of a rule for monks and nuns, had all the doors of a women's convent partitioned off, except for the entrance to the church, "so that none should go out until the day of his death". Some lay rulers, such as Charlemagne, also had to order the close supervision of women's convents, forbidding the building of monasteries for monks "at too convenient a distance from the nuns' convents". The synods did not fail to disapprove of the fact that in these houses there were "many nooks and crannies and dark places, because they would provoke God's vengeance for the crimes committed there". And they specify: "all the cells of the nuns must be destroyed, all accesses and doors that give rise to suspicion must be barred". And they demand "elderly and respectable watchmen" and only allow conversation with the nuns "in the presence of two or three sisters". And it states: "canons and monks must not visit nuns' convents. After mass, no conversation should take place between the religious and the nuns; the confession of the nuns should be heard only in the church, before the high altar and near witnesses".

The constitution of the Discalced Carmelite nuns prescribes: "No nun shall may enter the cell of another without the permission of the prioress! This must be observed on pain of severe punishment. "Let each one have the bed only for herself! "No sister is allowed to embrace another sister or to touch her face or hands! "The veil shall not be removed in front of anyone except the father, mother and brothers, or in a case where not wearing the veil is justified! "If a doctor, a surgeon or other persons who are necessary in the house, or the confessor, enter the cloister, two sisters must always go in front of them. If a sick sister goes to confession, let another sister remain at a distance that allows her to see the confessor" ^[127].

One member needs another

The Council of Trent, in view of the enormous proportions of the debauchery of nuns, threatened with excommunication anyone who

enter a women's convent without the written permission of the bishop. Even the bishop could only appear there in exceptional cases and in the company of "some older regulars".

The Church, even today, prefers to send harmless clerics to nuns' convents, "retired or ailing priests" as one sister laments, recalling the "hardships" of the nuns' life - that life of the nuns.

"and that phrase of St. Francis de Sales: "the female sex wants to be led". But by "retired or ailing priests"? Never! Therefore, "the task of the one who takes care of souls in a convent for women" is, of course, "a task of very great possibilities (...) which a priest can take advantage of" as long as he is "available". Ah, how easy it would have been to cite other authoritative opinions in support of this sensitive appeal! To St. Basil, for example: "The brothers have to perform services in women's convents which concern the care of souls and the needs of the body; and this is so because the sisters need their help". Or St. Ambrose: "The Church is one body though with different members; and one member needs another". Or St. Gregory Nazianzen, Doctor of the Church, like the other two: "spiritual procreation replaces carnal reproduction" ^[128].

Almost all of them with bellies

Naturally, where there were special surveillance measures was in the mixed monasteries, monasteries which, interestingly enough, existed from the very beginning. Already in Pachomius' time, monks could only visit nuns with the permission of their superiors and in the presence of "other trusted mothers", even when they were relatives. In the holy house of Alypius, a porticoed building near Chalcedon, the "saints" kept "as a rule and precept, never to be seen by the eyes of men". According to St. Basil's ordinances, a nun's confession was also to take place in the presence of the superior, and the superior herself could only be with the spiritual director on rare occasions and for a very short time.

However, as much as the sources insist on stressing the strict segregation of men and women, with time the contacts became closer and closer, as if it was precisely the strict separation that had encouraged their desire for rapprochement. The same friars denounce "that, when the monasteries of both are close together, the friars go in and out of the women's convents, each living in house" and fear "that the nuns are engaged in prostitution".

We can hardly imagine the tenacity with which the clergy clung to this institution. In any case, in Eastern Europe it was not until the beginning of the ninth century and only after a long struggle that it was finally abolished.

On the other hand, in the West, where the system of mixed monasteries -only emerged when it was already condemned in the East, it could be maintained until the 16th century despite all ecclesiastical resistance.

In the houses founded in 1148 by Gilbert of Sempringham - in which seven hundred monks and eleven hundred nuns aspired to sainthood, separated only by a wall - conversations were conducted through finger-length and inch-wide portholes, which did not allow one to see the other person and which, moreover, were constantly guarded by two nuns inside and a friar outside. During homilies and Stations of the Cross processions, the sexes were separated by curtains, and the nuns were not allowed to sing even in the church, so as not to endanger the ascetics. However, "almost all the holy maidens" had "a belly made" and almost all "secretly disposed of their children (...)" This was the reason why at the time of the Reformation so many children's bones were found in these convents, some buried and some hidden in the places they used to relieve themselves ^[129].

Barbarian penances

The punishments that, when the time came, fell on the nuns (or canonesses) were harsh; the harshest, in antiquity, were for those who broke the vow of chastity by marrying. When that happened,

Most of the time, excommunications were imposed and penances were demanded for life, sometimes even for those who repented. Thus, the first synod of Toledo, in the year 400, ordered: "If the sister of a bishop, a priest or a deacon, being consecrated to God, loses virtue or marries, neither her father nor her mother can receive her any more; the father will have to answer to the council; the woman will not be admitted to communion, unless, after the death of her husband, she does penance; but if she abandons him and wishes to do penance, she will receive holy viaticum at the end". How many conflicts were caused by measures of this kind! How many lives ruined forever! The synod itself decided

"That a nun in sin, as well as the one who has seduced her, shall serve a penance of ten years, during which time no woman may invite her to her house. If she is betrothed, she will only be allowed to do penance after she has separated or her husband has died.

For minor offences, flagellation was the punishment in use since antiquity. Both Pachomius - superior of the first monastery, as well as of the first mixed monastery, whose libido gave him no respite "not for a single moment, every day and every night" until old age - and Shenute

-The Coptic saint who ruled over 2,200 monks and 1,800 nuns - nurtured a suspicious weakness for corporal punishment. Later, the procedure in Spain for nuns' misdemeanours was a hundred lashes, imprisonment or expulsion; in the mid-7th century, the synod of Rouen ordered licentious nuns to be locked up and severely beaten; a rule for nuns drawn up by the bishop of Besançon, Donatus (died 660), threatened a bride of Christ who violated the rules with six, twelve, fifty or more lashes. The Concilium Germanicum, the first German national council, convened by King Charlemagne in 742 or 743, established a penance of imprisonment on bread and water for incontinent "handmaids of Christ", as well as three rounds of flogging followed by shaving of the head - especially dishonourable in the Middle Ages, and otherwise a sexual symbol of castration. Obviously, these punishments were also applied to those who had pronounced their vows by force or while they were still children (supra).

Gandersheim's singing voice

In any case, the whole atmosphere of the convents, the solitude, the longing for home, the sweet idleness, all gave wings to the erotic imagination.

A famous example of this can be found in the 10th century in the nun Roswitha, the first German poetess. The "singing voice", "the Gandersheim treble", "the servant of God with the melodious voice", excited and titillated her idle sisters with her insistent variations on the theme of love: she liked to copy the "indecent passages" of Terence and reflected, in more or less detail, the goings-on in "women's houses" with homosexual men, rowdy monks, whipping of naked girls, rapes and desecrations of corpses. Of course, only as a deterrent and as a contrast to "the commendable chastity of the holy maidens"... for she herself, during the writing, had been "often dead ashamed".

However, it was very rarely a matter of fantastic ecstasies. The Synod of Elvira (306) already distinguishes between the holy virgins, who fornicate only once ("semel"), and the others, who do it constantly ("*libidini servierint*").

Boniface, apostle of the Germans, who in the 8th century, in a letter to Bishop Cutbert of Canterbury, lambasts the atrocious situation of the Church of England (and when has the situation of the Church not been atrocious!), he proposes to his British colleague that "to reduce the extent of the opprobrium it would be useful for a synod and your princes to forbid frequent journeys to Rome for women in general and for women who have taken the habit in particular; for many are thus lost (morally) and very few return intact". A modern Catholic comments: "In these English nuns there was an immense longing to visit the holy city and the tombs of the apostles". The Franciscan Bertoldo of Regensburg was already making fun of the matter: "A woman's journey to Rome is worth as much as a hen's flight over the fence". In fact, pilgrims to Rome and nuns were the initiators of itinerant prostitution (infra).

[130]

"The convents are real brothels (...)"

In Charlemagne's time there were already nuns who fornicated for money, so that the emperor had to forbid them to go to the streets and put them under surveillance. Shortly afterwards, the synod of Aachen proclaimed that the nuns' convents were more like houses of prostitution (*lupanaria*) than convents: a comparison that was often repeated in the 9th century.

After a while, however, some convents came to surpass the brothels. "Modesty prevents us from saying to what extremes they go to in secret" thinks the superior Gerhoh of Reichersberg (1093-1169). "It is bad enough what is seen in the light of day". And a theologian close to Pope Benedict XIII expressed himself in a similar vein: "My sense of modesty prevents me from reflecting the way of life of the nuns". In England, where almost all the wives of God were recruited from among the *upper classes*, sexual relations between princes and nuns had a long tradition. In Romanian women's convents, travellers, even in modern times, enjoyed "brothel-like hospitality". In Russia, nuns' houses were always considered "dens of corruption in the full sense of the word" and were sometimes openly converted into houses of pleasure.

The close relationship between convents and prostitution, whose religious roots are, in any case, evident (*supra*), is also manifested in language. Thus, the owner of a brothel was called "abbesse" in medieval France. In popular German, the word "ábtissin" had a similar meaning. In America, the expression "nun" is still used today for "harlot" - cf. Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun*. Even a Catholic theologian describes as "characteristic" the fact that "in former times brothels were called "convents" or "abbeys", and their tenants "nuns"". "Thus, Avignon and Toulouse had obscene abbeys of that kind. Toulouse had a brothel called La Grande Abbaye in the Rué de Comenge, etc."

However, although the affairs of nuns were for the most part embellished - "it was necessary to keep silent" about excesses of the worst , confesses Bishop Stephen of Tournai in the 12th century, and

Similar statements are very frequent - with the scandals that have come down to us (mostly from religious people!) one could still fill a library.

From Northern Europe - where Brigid (1303-1373), the national saint of Sweden, complains that the doors of women's monasteries are open day and night to laymen and clerics - to Italy, nuns were evicted from many places, since their convents, it was said on the occasion of the eviction of the nuns of Chiemsee, were more like brothels than houses of prayer, a recurrent comparison, as has already been written. "It was not a place for pious cloistered women, but a brothel for satanic women", said Bishop Ivo of Chartres, who died in 1116, about the convent of St. Fara.

With the sharp increase in the number of women's orders in the late Middle Ages, their sexual character increased even more. Noisy orgies were held in the monastery of Kirchheim, the monastery of Oberndorf was called the "lupanar" of the nobility, and the same was true of the monastery of Kirchberg. In the monastery of Gnadenzell ("cell of grace") in Swabia, called Offenhausen ("open house"), the nuns were "day and night" at the disposal of their wealthy guests. In 1587, the abbess, born von Warberg, was ordered to be buried alive because of her relations with the canon - another typically Christian reaction.

In Klingenthal, near Basel, when there was an attempt to "make amends" to the nuns in 1482, they fought back with sticks and pokers; in Basel itself, some disgruntled nuns set fire to their convent.

The convents of Interlaken, Frauenburn, Trub, Gottstadt, (next to Bern), Ulm and Mühihausen were also openly recognised as brothels. The municipal council of Lausanne ordered the nuns not to harm the harlots. And the city council of Zurich passed a severe ordinance "against the licentious customs of women's convents". Consequently, in 1526 the sisters of St. Clare in Nuremberg moved directly from their convent to the brothel. The convent of St. Thomas in Leipzig was said to be one of the wonders of the world, because there were so many children in it and not a single woman. The Franciscan Mumer made fun of it:

The one who makes the most children as abbess will be honoured

The biblical dictum "Blessed are the barren" also applies, since it was not possible to destroy the "spiritual offspring" everywhere, as was done in the monastery of St. Bridget in Stralsund or in the monastery of Mariakron, where, when the monastery was destroyed, the "spiritual offspring" were found.

"heads of children and even whole bodies, hidden or buried, in secret chambers or elsewhere" (The protection of the life of the unborn!). (The protection of the life of the unborn!) And whatever the truth in the matter of the children's heads - between three and six thousand heads, allegedly - fished out of the pond of a Roman convent - *se non vero, ben tróvalo* - it is, in any case, on record that the nymphomaniac nuns welcomed the monks, literally, with open arms. Sebastian Brant, a pious Catholic, tells a similar story.

Italian writers of the Renaissance covered nuns with mockery and discredit. One of the most important novelists of his time, Tommaso Masuccio, who lived at the court of Naples, claims that nuns were to belong exclusively to the monks, who had to celebrate formal weddings - with their feast, even with sung mass and contract. But as soon as they went after a layman, they were to be persecuted. "I myself", says the author, "have been in a similar situation, not once but several times; I have seen it, I have felt it. Then these nuns give birth to pretty little friars, or else they get rid of the fruit (...) It is true that the monks, for their part, make it easy for them in confession, and impose on them an Our Father for things for which they would refuse absolution to any layman, as if he were a heretic" ^[131].

Cryptosexual cruelty

Once, when the Bishop of Kastel visited the convent in Sopphlingen near Ülm because of the constant gossip about this place of perdition, he found in the cells a real collection of double keys, provocative dresses, burning letters... and almost all the nuns.

pregnant women. The latter was the worst: that the sin would spread from mouth to mouth, that it would start to scream, and not in a figurative sense. For a nun to give birth was considered a particularly serious crime, and sometimes the other sisters took cruel revenge on the pregnant woman, since her condition endangered their own *dolce vita*.

In the 12th century, Abbot Ailredo of Revesby tells of a nun who had been left in a state of good hope in the monastery of Wattum. When the fact became known, some advised to beat her, others to burn her, and others to burn her over red-hot coals. Finally, the opinion some older and more compassionate women prevailed, and she was thrown into a cell in chains, with the added humiliation of being left on bread and water. Shortly before the birth, the prisoner begged to be released, as her lover, a fugitive friar, intended to fetch her one night, after receiving a certain signal; but the sisters managed to extract from the nun the place of the meeting, and stationed there a hooded father, accompanied by other brothers, who waited in hiding, armed with clubs. The lover, having been warned, arrived at the appointed time and, as he was embracing the disguised father, he was captured. The nuns then forced the pregnant woman to castrate him and to put his still bleeding genitals in her mouth, and they both ended up in prison.

A totally different example of cryptosexual cruelty: At the end of the 19th century, the holy women of a Russian convent had detained a young man for four weeks and made him fornicate to the point of almost killing him. Because of his weakness, he was no longer able to resume his journey. He lay there convalescing and, in the end, the nuns, fearing a scandal, tore him to pieces and plunged him, piece by piece, into a fountain.

Instruments of the spirit or sin "*per machinam*".

Since the sisters found it so difficult to love a man, it is only natural that they devoted themselves to other forms of pleasure, just as the monks did.

If tribadism was rare in the Middle Ages, it must have been frequent in the convents. Often, the wives of the Lord, inflamed with desire for their companions and *faute de mieux*, had recourse to certain prostheses, which they used alone or mutually. Already the *Poenitentiale bedae* threatens: "if a consecrated virgin sins with a consecrated virgin by means of an instrument ("per machinam"), let there be seven years of penance".

Unfortunately, the Church has not preserved such spiritual instruments for us. As relics, they might seem inappropriate...

And what a role they played in the martyrdom of the virgins!

But most of the time the sisters would opt for the simplest solutions; for example the hand, which is, in any case, "the most spiritual part of the body": "delicately shaped, composed of different limbs, mobile and criss-crossed with nerves of great sensitivity. In short, a tool in which the person reveals his own soul (...)".

They could also have resorted to other elongated objects, even if they were not originally *ad hoc*; for example, candles - in a convent, no less! "Can't you feel something noble rising up before you? Look at it, how it stands undaunted in its place, upright, pure and noble. Feel how everything in her says: 'I am ready'!"

It is not surprising that Romano Guardini, the sensitive pseudomystic -The "educator (...) of young German Catholics between the two world wars" - omits from his chapter on "The Candle" (which begins in a sweepingly original way: "how singular is the nature of our soul") those occasional fishing lines in the virgin vaginas of the nuns. To think of it would not have been so out of place. The phallic symbolism of the candle is ancient and we find traces of it even in the paschal rite, especially in the Greek Orthodox rite, in which the candle is dipped three times into the baptismal font, symbol of the feminine principle of water, and the following formula of consecration is said: "May the power of the Holy Spirit descend upon this full font (...) and make all this water fruitful so that it may bring about the new birth" ([132]).

Bijoux de Religieuse

For some nuns, a candle was not enough; even the most spiritual part of the body might not be enough. Indeed, research into the form and quality of the devices that served the satisfaction of the unsatisfied has been groping its way for a long time. However, in the middle of the 19th century, one of those valuable - and once (who knows to what extent) coveted - objects called "godemiché" (Latin for "gaude mihi" "gives me pleasure") or "plaisir de dames" was located in an Austrian convent of nuns: "(...) a tube 21.25 centimetres long, tapering a little at one end, the diameter of the widest entrance being four centimetres and that of the narrowest three and a half centimetres. The edges of both ends are curved and grooved, evidently for the purpose of increasing friction. The surface is decorated with obscene drawings that would have an obvious erotic effect: the crude silhouette of a vagina, that of an erect penis and, finally, a markedly steatopygous figure with an erect penis or a kind of phallic prosthesis. The inside of the tube was smeared with tallow'.

Poor nuns! Even as onanists or lesbians they did not get very far, and the dildos they possessed had remained in prehistoric times. However, these items had become increasingly refined, especially since the Italian Renaissance, when one could count on artificial phalluses with milk-filled scrotums hanging from them, which, once inserted into the vagina, could be used to enjoy a simulated ejaculation at the decisive moment. On one occasion, Catherine de Medicis found no less than four of these *arricies de voyage* - also called "bienfaiteurs" (benefactors) - in the boot of one of her ladies-in-waiting.

However, even God's wives were able to enjoy such products of technological development, especially in civilised regions. It is not for nothing that in France the artificial penis designed for women's self-satisfaction is called "bijoux de religieuse" (nun's jewellery)! And when, in 1783, brothel owner Marguerite Gourdan (Petite Comtesse) - the most famous of her century - died, she found herself among the most famous of her century, the "bijoux de religieuse" (nun's jewellery).

The Gourdan's belongings contained hundreds of orders for such monkish bijoux, which came from various French convents. La Gourdan had a kind of penis factory where the coveted pieces would be given the final finish, to which was added a scrotum filled with a liquid that could be injected during orgasm.

Of course, in the long run, contact with less artificial - or more natural, if we want to be explicit - limbs might have been more available to the nuns. And if they could not count on those of men, they would have to make do with others. In 1231, the synod of Rúan, "propter scandala", stipulated that the nuns "must not raise or educate children in the convents; they must eat and sleep all together, but each one in her own bed". Something similar occurred at the Spain of 1583, where, to cause of the "In the end, it was ordered that "no one, child or adult, who does not intend to enter the order, should be allowed to remain in the convent". So, in the end, some sisters could only enjoy loving animals. Many nuns, especially in English convents, kept rabbits, dogs and monkeys; they even went to with them, until, finally, they were only allowed to keep one cat ^[133].

Therapeutics "melancholy".

The situation of the wives of Jesus took on tragic overtones when they had no recourse to the limbs of the anointed, nor to those of the laity, the children, the dogs or the shepherds, and when not even onanism or lesbianism made it possible to satisfy certain desires; when, therefore, the monotonous existence in their cell, the lack of fresh air, in a word, all melancholy of their enforced solitude was translated into hysteria and, by means of hallucinations and visions, they lived that which the stepmother Church denied them.

It is not difficult to understand that many nuns were and have continued to be tormented by severe depressions. Forced into a perverted life, they had to react accordingly. And what measures were taken against them?

A figure such as Teresa of Avila recommends for the treatment of "melancholic" - that is, those who were more natural, more sensitive, more critical than the others - the classic recipe used in clerical circles to this day: "Let the prioresses be warned that the best way is to keep them very busy with the work of the convent, so that they no longer have time to indulge in their fantasies; for therein lies all the evil". (In the first monasteries for men, work already had an ascetic function. Its true consecration as a "modern virtue" properly begins with Luther, who is also responsible for the ingenious comparison: "Man is born to work, as a bird is born to fly").

these vitally frustrated women indulged in pastimes with a somewhat more comic overtone. There were curious infections that afflicted the whole convent. In the 15th century, one nun bit another on the ear, and the latter liked it so much that she bit a third, and so on, the phenomenon spreading from one convent to another.

In a certain French convent they did not bite ears, but (perhaps for want of a cat) they began to meow at the slightest opportunity. The matter took on such proportions that the government had to intervene to stop it.

The incubi daemons

The cases of sexual madness in women's convents (most of which took on epidemic proportions) are countless.

Already in the early Middle Ages, the Dominican Thomas de Chantimpré mockingly points out how the *incubi daemons* harassed the nuns so insistently that neither the sign of the cross, nor holy water, nor the sacrament of communion could keep them at bay. This kind of monastic erotomania culminated in the 16th and 17th centuries: it was not at all, as was then still believed, a special form of diabolical obsession, but, on the contrary, an impetuous process of psychotic liberation by which the repressed came to the fore in order to avoid the total self-destruction of the body. Today, this sexual psychosis is described follows: "Young girls who have never

have had sexual intercourse, they perform, in full erotic delirium, the movements of coitus, undress, masturbate with a kind of exhibitionist pride that the layman could scarcely imagine, and utter obscene words which they swear fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters have never heard before".

Johannes Weyer, the Dutch physician who was the first to publicly protest against the Christian obsession with witches - his writing *De praestigiis daemonum*, which appeared in 1563, was included in the index - belonged at 1565 to a commission that investigated new

The "incantations" in the monastery of Nazareth in Cologne. "Their erotic character was evident. The nuns had convulsive attacks during which they lay on their backs, with their eyes closed, completely rigid or making the movements of coitus. It had all started with a girl who imagined that her lover was visiting her at night. The convulsions, which soon infected the whole convent, had started after some boys who had secretly gone to visit the nuns at night had been caught.

A century later, the Devil began to copulate with the Ursulines of Auxonne. The doctors called to testify by the Burgundian parliament found no evidence of this, but they did discover in almost all the nuns the symptoms of a disease once known as "uterine rage". These symptoms were: "an ardour accompanied by an irrepressible craving for sexual enjoyment" and, among the younger sisters, an inability "to think or speak of anything that was not sexually related". Eight nuns claimed to have been deflowered by the spirits. There was no one to remedy this. However, the spiritual spell cured them "instantly of the tears of the virgo" and made "disappear, by means of holy water poured into the mouth, the tumefactions of the womb caused by copulation with devils and witches". Sadly, the candle-ends and the probes laden with satanic tongues and foreskins, extracted from the virgin vaginas, also disappeared: palpable proofs of the infernal burning [134].

Loudon's Demon

Nuns belonging to the same order, the Ursulines of Loudon, had similar sexual relationships as early as the 17th century, one of the most notorious scandals of its kind.

The convent superior, Jeanne des Anges, beautiful, young and all too vulnerable to the temptations of the flesh, was insistently harassed ("more than I can say"), despite all kinds of mortifications, by a violent itching of the senses, by evil spirits who, as she recounts in her autobiography, offering themselves in provocative positions, made vehement propositions, tore her nightdress, felt every inch of her skin and besieged her to give herself to them.

"One night," he writes by way of example, "I seemed to notice someone's breathing and heard a voice say: 'the time for resisting is over' (...) Then impure impressions paraded through my imagination and I felt a series of disordered movements of my body (...) Then I heard a loud noise in my room and had the feeling that someone was approaching me, reaching into my bed and touching me (...) A few days later, at about midnight, my whole body began to tremble and I felt a great spiritual oppression, without knowing the reason. experiencing this for a while, I heard noises in different parts of the room. A voice asked me if I had thought about the advantageous offer that had been made to me and added: 'I give you three days to think about it'. I got up and went to the Holy Eucharist full of fear and worry. Back in my room, as I was about to sit down, the chair pulled back and I fell to the floor. I heard a man's voice saying lewd and pleasant things to seduce me. He asked me to make room for him on my bed; he tried to touch me in an indecent way. I defended myself and prevented him while calling the nuns who were near my room. The window had been open; now it was closed. I had strong amorous feelings for a certain person and an unseemly longing for dishonourable things".

That "certain person" who, as he said on another occasion, regrettably did not provide it with the "due enjoyment" (so it was replaced by the

demon Asmodeus, one of her at least seven demons), was the priest Urbain Grandier, a handsome man, as intelligent as he was charming, whom she had never seen, but whose bedtime stories had so sipped her brain that she longed to have him as her convent's confessor! Grandier, however, whom a jealous mistress held fast, declined the offer, and then came the visions of Sister Jeanne and some of her own. Shortly afterwards three exorcists also arrived, three venerable fathers, who did their work so well that, as Huxley ironically remarks, after a few days all the nuns (except two or three of the oldest) were possessed and received nightly visits from the priest... "The exorcism of evil spirits belongs to the order of Grace".

The performances continued for years. Under the curious gaze of princes and priests, thousands of people flocked to watch them. The extravagances of these chronically malnourished women, who helped each other to maintain the atmosphere of affectionate enthusiasm, became increasingly outrageous. Suddenly, they would start to tremble and writhe. They would lift up their skirts and blouses, strike the most daring poses, in an attitude that would force onlookers to cover their eyes.

-They were jumping on their parents' necks, trying to kiss them, masturbating with crucifixes, howling obscenities, shouting profanities, using such filthy slang, that they were not even aware of the phenomenon, and so on.

"that the most vicious men were ashamed of her and, both when they undressed and when they invited those present to all sorts of indecencies, their behaviour would have astonished the tenants of the most vulgar brothel in the country". In short, there were all the symptoms that the French neurologist Jean Charcot was later to show through the *hystericæ* in his care.

It is understandable that one of the exorcists, the Jesuit Surin, confesses that the role of the temptations of the flesh was always evident, and that even he himself, owner and master of the "bewitched" women, had the privilege of "doing what he wanted with these creatures of a lower order: inducing them to perform various tricks, provoking convulsive fits, treating them as if they were sows or wild cows, prescribing laxatives or

whipping". Two other exorcists and an official doctor who assisted them went mad. But after a battle against the spirits that had lasted six years, as soon as the Church withdrew the subsidies from the group of condemned nuns, the demons left the nuns' wombs. Abbé Grandier had long since been burned at the stake.

Spectacular cases of possession were not infrequent at that time, for example those of the nuns of Lille, Louvier, Chinon, Nîmes and others; they were still repeated in the 18th century and even ravaged some Protestant countries ([135]).

The holy kidnapper

Monasticism was rejected by the Reformed churches, which demanded the suppression of all orders with binding vows. These were considered at the time as "undue, false and therefore unnecessary worship" as "service to the devil" (*servitus Satanae*), and similar expressions.

With characteristic fury, Luther refuted the opinion about the superiority of virginity and declared that a maid (with faith) who swept the house performed a better task and was more pleasing to God than a nun who mortified herself. "The same thing happened to St. Anthony when he had to learn that a shoemaker or a tanner was a better Christian in Alexandria than he was with his monastic sacrifices".

Luther not only stressed that chastity depended "as little on us (...) as the working of miracles", but he dared to make the following - not at all far-fetched - statement: "Even if we were to keep in chains all those who serve the papacy, we should not find one who would keep himself chaste until he was forty years old. And yet they pretend to discourse on virginity and to censure everyone, when they are up to their necks in the mire".

Since Luther knew this "slime" well, since he believed he knew that in the convents, the nuns are chaste only by force and renounce men of bad willingly", no hesitated in providing them the "freedom".

He even resorted to kidnapping them (an act that was once severely punishable). So on the evening of Glory Saturday 1523, he managed to get some nuns out of a convent, sending an emissary, the citizen Koppe, the "blessed kidnapper", to whom he gave the appropriate acknowledgement: "Like Christ, you too have freed these poor souls from the prison of human tyranny precisely at Easter time, when Christ did the same for his own souls".

Such actions, so pleasing to God - which prompted Luther's writing entitled Cause and Answer how virgins can leave convents for the love of God - were then not so infrequent, and were occasionally followed by the sale at auction of the freed women. "The news has reached us," reports one of the schismatic priests to another, "they are beautiful, distinguished, all of them of nobility, and I have found none over fifty years of age. The eldest, my dear brother, I have reserved for your wife. But if you wish to have a younger one, choose from among the most beautiful". And the Freiberg chronicler writes of that time, when "the gospel was first preached here": "there was hardly a day when a friar, priest, nun or other virgin was not married; every day was a banquet". On the other hand, in the 20th century there are still those who are still unhappy:

"These pitiful victims of seduction understandably lost their moral support outside the convent".

We know what that support was like inside the convent. In fact, they were once so generous that they tolerated the depiction of clerical prostitution even in churches. Until the 19th century, all of amorous scenes could be admired in churches, on canvas or in stone: in Strasbourg cathedral, a monk at the feet of a blessed woman whose petticoat he lifted; at the entrance to Erfurt cathedral, a monk lying with a bride of Christ; in the main church of Nordlingen, a woman raped by Beelzebub in the presence of the highest spiritual dignitaries; and so on. Still today, in a church in Beaujolais, a billy goat mounts a nun.

Finally, the moral "support" of the nuns was truly proverbial: "He who deals with saints sanctifies himself," said the monk, and slept on

one night with six nuns. We all sin, said the abbess as her belly swelled. I don't want to be idle, said the nun as she climbed into the priest's bed. I don't, I don't, said the monk, who was supposed to make the nun a bishop, and made her a little daughter. If they wanted to reproach someone for his debauchery, they would say: he is a whoremonger like a Carmelite. The friars, as one of his own wrote, had "become a joke (...) They were laughed at by the old man, the young man and the gossiping woman".

And today?

Today the clergy no longer even recommends the convent and "globally rejects" the religious state for women, or at least contemplates it.

"with a great lack of interest". This, at least, is the informed opinion of one nun, who also states: "Many priests are dismissive, reserved, aloof and sceptical about the religious vocation of women. They discourage young girls, and also adult women and widows, from entering the convent, and not precisely for consistent reasons (health, lack of vocation, neglected parents, etc.) but because they have no sympathy for the regular life as such, because they consider it old-fashioned, outdated, anachronistic, and think it is a pity for a girl to be locked up in a convent". And the sister adds expressly:

"They do not only advise against contemplative orders, or against this or that convent with which they have had a bad experience; they advise against the regular life as such (...) Instead of being a help, the clergy are a hindrance" ^[136]. The clergy itself, what it was and what it is, is the subject of the following book.

FOURTH BOOK THE CLERGY

*Your faces have been more damaging to your faith than our
reasons!*

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

CHAPTER 14

THE SPREAD OF THE MARRIAGE OF PRIESTS

Thus, the bishop must be blameless; a man of one wife.

I. TIM., 3,2

Certainly, the Church accepts a married man, whether priest, deacon or layman, if he makes an irreproachable use of marriage; then he will be a sharer in Salvation by raising his children.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Doctor of the Church

Let everyone choose what they want.

ATANASIUS, Doctor of the Church^[137]

The criticism of celibacy is a no-brainer for today's "progressive" clerics. They boldly write that the "priests" of early Christianity were not kept away from women and sex, that the early church did not impose celibacy on anyone, that a married man could become a priest and a bishop, and so on.

However, why is there silence about the strong contradictions between Jesus and the clergy, or more precisely, between the Gospel and the hierarchy? Is it because the clergy would be willing to

Would they want to renounce celibacy, but not to renounce their priesthood? Would they want to have a wife, but not to be deprived of the office? In 1970, an "action society" of German religious, opposed to celibacy, expressed its rebellion in these words: "We ask: what does 'betrayal' mean here? Who is 'disloyal' here? We are consecrated to priestly service. That is our commitment. We are loyal to it. Many priests who marry are willing to maintain their loyalty to priestly service".

The thing is rather sad. In any case, during the whole apostolic age there was no separation of any kind between clergy and laity, no priests, no Church, no altars; the mass was not bound to sacred spaces or to officials. It was only, by little, the

The "priest" was brought into the picture, communion - at first a vulgar traditional meal - became a banquet with cultic significance, and finally became the focal point of the mass: a complete mixture of Jewish and Hellenistic elements ⁽¹³⁸⁾.

"Unius uxoris vir" or the biblically based way of life

All this had nothing to do with Jesus. Nor with his disciples, who were still accompanied by their wives on their missionary journeys (above) and therefore could not demand celibacy from anyone. Nor is the subject dealt with anywhere in the New Testament. Instead, according to I. Tim. 3, 2 and 3, 12, the bishop and deacon have to be men "of one wife" (*unius uxoris vir*). The pastoral letters mention married deacons no less than three times and expressly warn against false teachers "who forbid marriage". (However, the German Primate, Cardinal Döpfner, defends celibacy as "a biblically founded and biblically oriented way of life").

Early Christian life was lived at home, between wife and children. And for centuries it was fathers of families who performed the role of clergy. The majority of the early Catholic clergy were married men, and by the early Middle Ages the

Most of the higher clergy were in the same situation. Many priests cohabited with women, even without formal ties; they practised concubinage and polygamy, they were *fornicatores notorii*. It is true that after ordination few married. But if their marriage was prior to this, there was still no prescription in the third century that forbade them to have sexual relations.

And in the fourth century the Apostolic Constitutions - the most voluminous code of the Church in antiquity - still advocated the marriage of clerics; as did the synods of Ancyra (in Galatia) and Gangra (in Paphlagonia), which anathematized the later Christians who claimed that one could not attend services celebrated by married priests. Athanasius himself, who in his time knew bishops and monks who were fathers, declared: "let each one choose what he wills". St. Gregory of Nyssa married Theosebia and continued to live with her as a bishop; Gregory of Nazianzus, another doctor of the Church, was the son of a bishop; and even in the fifth century many bishops are reported to have had offspring, although bachelors voluntarily kept abstinence.

What is more, on the tombstones of married dignitaries one can often read strong protests against celibacy ⁽¹³⁹⁾.

The Trullan Council

The council that met at the beginning of the seventh century, attended by more than two hundred bishops, still notes "that in Africa, Libya and elsewhere, the most God-fearing bishops visit their wives". While it is true that the Trullanum rails against sexual relations of bishops within marriage, it authorises them in the case of subdeacons, deacons and priests, provided they were married before acquiring the subdiaconal dignity. The famous canon reads as follows: "Having noted that in the Roman Church it is customary for those who acquire the diaconal or priestly dignity to promise that they do not intend to maintain marital intercourse with their wives, We ordain, according to the ancient law of apostolic care and disposition, that the lawful marriages of holy men shall

to maintain themselves hereafter, and by no means to dissolve the union with their wives, and by no means to avoid cohabitation when it is convenient".

Moving forward in time, in the East celibacy was never endorsed. In 1504, Cardinal Humbert, one of the most influential curiales of his time, intervened in Constantinople against the marriage of priests, and said: "young married men, still exhausted by pleasure, celebrate at the altar. And immediately afterwards they embrace their wives again with their hands sanctified by the immaculate body. That is not the hallmark of the true faith, but an invention of Satan". At this intervention, Nicetas, the abbot of the monastery of Studiu, commented that the cardinal was "more foolish than an ass". For the East, which was setting the standard in theological matters. The West, with its growing aversion to clerical marriage, was a world of barbarians.

The papacy also tolerated the marriage of priests for a long time.

In the time of St Patrick (372-461), who was sent by Rome to evangelise Ireland and became its national saint, married religious appeared completely normal. Throughout the Merovingian period they were also under no obligation to dissolve marriage, and most had sexual relations without concealment. Not even the synods of Spain - where the first celibacy decree (*infra*) arose - mention clerical abstinence in marriage until the beginning of the 6th century.

In Germany, the Great Council of Aachen in 816 authorised the ordination of married men to the priesthood; and still in 1019, hindering the ministry of married religious was punished by the Synod of Goslar with excommunication.

In Rome, there were sons of priests who became popes until the 10th century: Boniface I, Felix III, Agapito I, Theodore I, Adrian II, Martin II, Boniface VI and others. Several of them were canonised: St. Boniface I,

Saint Silverius and Saint Diospadus. And there were even popes who were the sons of popes, such as Silverius, the son of Pope Hormisdas, or John XI, the son of Sergius III. In the 11th century, all religious in southern Italy continued to marry openly. And as for the north, Guido of Ferrara, an eyewitness, writes: "all over Emilia and Liguria, deacons and priests took women into their houses, celebrated weddings, married their daughters, united the sons they had begotten with rich and distinguished wives". On the other hand, many of the *concupinati* priests were living Rome in the middle of the 11th century.

In sober England, celibacy began to be introduced even later. There, in the eighth and ninth centuries even the marriage of bishops was customary; synods tolerated the marriage of rural clergy until the high Middle Ages; and thereafter a British prelate consoled himself thus:

"Women may be taken away from priests, but not priests from women".

In Hungary, Denmark and Sweden, there were still married religious in the 13th century; in northern Sweden and Iceland the marriage of clergymen continued to exist until the Reformation sanctioned it again ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾.

CHAPTER 15

THE REASONS FOR CELIBACY

Rome wanted to rule; for this she needed blind instruments, unwilling slaves, and she found them in a celibate clergy who were not bound by any family ties to the fatherland and the sovereign, whose main - and only - duty consisted in unconditional obedience to Rome.

A Catholic religious (anonymous) from the 19th century

The "impurity" of married life

At first, a determining factor for celibacy was the ancient and widespread belief that the success of the ritual depended on the priest's chastity. Sexual relations and the priestly ministry, the

The "impurity" of married life and the "holiness" of spiritual work were considered incompatible (supra). To justify this idea, the demands of the Old Testament - borrowed from paganism - were recalled, which had banished all sexuality from the realm of the Temple (supra); a purifying obsession which the New Testament completely ignores. In any case, in the East, where there were generally only services on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the Church only required abstinence for the priest on those days; in the West, where mass was held daily - the custom began in Rome - absolute continence in married life was insisted upon. This almost superhuman renunciation would increase

the prestige of the religious in the eyes of the people, it would give him credibility and respectability, it would make him a kind of idol, a figure above mortals, a leader and father at the same time, whom people would look up to, allowing themselves to be governed by him: an image of the priest that has only now begun to be completely dismantled.

Who is going to pay for this?

But since coercion, rather than chastity, induced clerics to debauchery, the cultic motivation does not seem to have been decisive. A political-financial motive soon entered the scene: naturally, unmarried religious were cheaper for the bishops than those with wives and children.

The economic motive appears in countless laws and synodal decrees right up to the present day, for, not so long ago, the late Cardinal Spellmann, Archbishop of New York and the Pope's "financial genius", asked: "Who is going to pay for this?"

The early Christian rulers did not discriminate against married religious or their families. But in 528 the Emperor Justinian ruled that anyone who had children (and not anyone who was married!) could not become a bishop. The reason for this oft-reproduced decree was undoubtedly budgetary in nature. Only two years later, Justinian also lashed out against those who married after ordination

"and beget children of women". At that time, he declared null and void all marriages celebrated after priestly ordination and all their offspring already born or yet to be born, illegitimate, infamous and without right of succession. In the middle of the 6th century, Pope Pelagius I consecrated a father of a family as bishop of Syracuse, stipulating, however, that his children could not inherit any "ecclesiastical property". The third synod of Lyons (583) only threatened suspension "if a son was born". But as Christianisation progressed, there was an increasing tendency to disinherit the offspring of priests (infra)^[141].

The Lord's business

But surely the constant availability of unmarried clergymen was even more important for the ecclesiarchs than the financial factor. After all. St Paul already knew that "the unmarried man is concerned with the things of God, but the married man is concerned with the things of the world, how to please wife; he is therefore divided". And to this day, no other biblical passage has been used as much to substantiate priestly celibacy (without taking into account that Paul, obviously, could not be referring to priests in any case, something that is most often ignored), since it clearly indicates what is needed: instruments without their own will, with exclusive dedication, not tied to any family, society or state, in order to be able to exercise power through them.

Therefore, when Pius IV, during the Council of Trent (1545-1563), asked the Christian princes to make positive proposals, and the German Emperor Ferdinand I and the kings of France and Bohemia demanded authorisation for the marriage of clerics, the prelates resolutely opposed this. "The marriage of priests?" apostrophised Cardinal de Carpi to the pope, "have you not reflected that, from that moment, they would no longer depend on the pope but on their prince, towards whom they would show their satisfaction in every way, to the detriment of the Church and out of love for their wives and children?"

And when, in the eighteenth century, during a discussion on celibacy, Cardinal Rezzonico advised that the curial finances should be restored to health by granting dispensation to all priests who requested permission to marry and paid for it - "a cequí at the time (...) and then a few talers every year" - it seems that the Pope, although at first acknowledging the suggestion with the note of "better proposal" (*optima propositio*), then clearly rejected it. For clerics, being single, guarantee the business of the Lord (and of the lords) much more effectively than if they had a family... even if they were to pay for it!

"(...) Venus refuses me more than I refuse her".

The problem of celibacy is undoubtedly influenced by a biological circumstance: the fact that the Church is almost always governed by older men. For even though they may have been worldly and frivolous in their youth, even eloquent propagandists for the marriage of clerics, in old age, tired, impotent and sadistic, they demand celibacy.

A typical example of this: Aeneas Silvius of Piccolomini. At the Council of Basel he recalled the married popes and Peter, prince of the apostles, who was also married; his opinion was that "although the marriage of religious has been forbidden for good reasons, it should be re-authorised for even better reasons". But, having become Pius II, Aeneas not only included in the index the *Eroticae*, composed by himself, but made an appeal for continence to a priest friend who sought to obtain his dispensation to marry, advising him to shun the female sex like the plague and to regard every woman as a devil. "Surely you will say," continued the pope, "how strict Aeneas is! Now he praises chastity to me; how different his words were when he spoke to me in Vienna and Neustadt! True, but the years are shortening, death is approaching (...) Venus abhors me. Certainly, my strength is also diminishing. My hair is grey, my nerves are parched, my bones are rotten and my body riddled with wrinkles. I can no longer please any woman, nor can she please me (...) The truth is that Venus refuses me more than I refuse her".

In addition to this biological reason, there is often a more psychological one, which was certainly not only among the popes. There are those who suspect (again from the Catholic side) that the fact that the old prelates advocate celibacy is the result of a secret desire for revenge, "so that a future generation will not be able to enjoy a more sincere and fuller life, because one had to renounce it oneself" ⁽¹⁴²⁾.

CHAPTER 16

THE SUPPRESSION OF THE MARRIAGE OF PRIESTS

From this thousands and thousands of the happiest families of priests were thrown into misery fu misery, "by fire and sword" by the monastic party that seized power.

GSCHWIND. theologian^[143]

The possibilities of punishment were very great, because the clergy were, by office and status, completely dependent on the Church.

MARTIN BOELEN, Catholic theologian^[144]

But the witch-hunt is not over yet. The inquisitors, judges, jailers and executioners continue their work in the guise of the pope, bishops, priests and laymen.

FRITZ LEIST. Catholic^[145]

Although the marriage of priests continued to exist for quite some time, the decisive turning point had already begun in the year 306 with the Synod of Elvira in southern Spain, where the first decree on celibacy was approved: "Bishops, priests, deacons, in short, all clerics who exercise the sacred ministry, that is to say, who celebrate the sacrament of celibacy, should be celibate.

the divine office, they must keep continence with their wives, under penalty of suspension".

This prohibition, which was decisive for all subsequent developments in the West, initially affected only part of the Spanish Church. For elsewhere, the pressure exerted on the clergy was aimed, rather than at ensuring their marital continence, at preventing extra-marital relations and other similar "crimes". It was on the threshold of the 5th century that Elvira's rule was taken up by Popes Siricius and Innocent I and spread in the West.

In any case, neither bachelorhood, as a principle, nor the dissolution of existing marriages was required, but "only" the termination of sexual relations. For quite some time, deacons, priests and bishops were also not required to separate from their respective wives, whom the synods continued to refer to as "the deacon's wife", "the priest's wife", or "the bishop's wife". If the husbands promised that henceforth they would have "their wives as if they had none" - "in order that married love may be preserved, while the marriage task ceases" as the memorably perverse instructions (458 or 459) of Leo I to Bishop Rusticus of Narbonne read - they could become or remain priests, thus evidently asking an impossible, pushing the convicts into a life of hypocrisy and pretence.

Otherwise, the decrees differed from one another, were not always unambiguous, were modified and adapted to the circumstances, watered down or extreme and, if necessary, completely ignored.

Guarded day and night

But above all, and recurrently, the prohibition of clerics sharing a house with *mulieres extraneae* or *subintroductae* was imposed, a possibility that the papacy fought, for a long time, with special zeal and little results, and that the Trullanum denied, even to castrated priests.

The Synod of Elvira authorised the religious to live only with their wives, as well as with their sisters and daughters consecrated to God, but did not permit the presence of the *mulier extranea*, who most of the time was in charge of running the house and who was at first the main object of the synod's preventions. Later, however, it went so far as to prevent all women, slave and free, from entering the priest's house, and religious were also forbidden to visit women, especially in the evening or at night. It was only allowed in essential cases and always in the company of a cleric as a witness. Even the priest's wife was denied access to her husband's bedroom.

Naturally, the decrees were widely flouted. What cost the clerics the most was to separate from the common bed. Bishop Simplicius of Auxerre himself and his wife kept it... "as a proof of confidence in the strength of their virtue".

The synod of Tours (567) represented a momentary climax in all this kind of orders and intrusions. Besides again depriving the priests of *the strangers* (now presenting them as snakes); besides preventing the religious around the bishop from having any contact with the slaves of the bishop's wife, the episcopa - whom he himself could only regard as a sister and under their supervision; In addition to granting the said religious the right to throw *strangers* out of their houses; as if all this were not enough, it was ordered: "since many archpriests of the country, and deacons and subdeacons, are suspected of having relations with their wives, the archpriest should always have a cleric at his side who accompanies him everywhere and has his bed in the same cell as he does". Seven subdeacons - or even laymen (!) - who took turns every week had to keep watch over the archpriest, on pain of being beaten if they refused to do so.

Later, some bishops were also charged with vigilantism. In 633, a synod under the presidency of St. Isidore decided the following:

"Since the life of the religious has caused no little scandal, the bishops should have with them in their rooms witnesses to their way of life, in order to deprive the laity of all cause for suspicion".

And in 675, the synod of Braga strictly forbade a cleric without a trusted guardian to accompany a woman, with the exception of her mother. Previously the company of sisters, daughters and even nieces had still been tolerated; for: "in relation to these persons it is sacrilege to suppose anything other than what is fixed by Nature". The synod of Macon, in 581, had extended such authorisation to the grandmother.

So there came a time when the Council Fathers were suspicious of everyone. It was then forbidden for granddaughters, nieces, daughters, sisters and mothers to stay in the s house - at first only in southern Europe, then in Germany and France, and finally in England - because the religious would make out with their own relatives, as the Council of Mainz recognised in 888. In addition, there was the danger of other women arriving in the company of family members, as the bishop of Soissons reflected in 889. Hence, the church and its surroundings were also watched; as Regino of Prüm demanded in his Instruction for the control of priests, written in 906 (at the suggestion of Bishop Ratbodo of Trier), the visitor was to check "if the priest has a small alcove next to the church" or "if there are suspicious doors in the vicinity" ^[146].

For married priests: life imprisonment

But it was clearly not all about prescriptions. For a millennium, all kinds of pressure measures were preferred: fasting, fines, loss of office, excommunication, public humiliation, torture, temporary or life imprisonment, loss of inheritance rights and enslavement. Observance of - to use the Pauline expression - "God's business" had, as always, disproportionate consequences.

Often clerics who had sexual relations with their wives - a situation that synods liked to refer to as "the return

of the dog to his vomit" - were punished by suspension. With the exception of a few cases of restitution, this entailed definitive expulsion from the clerical state. Very often, however, the choice was made to imprison the "(The confinement alone, without the need to aggravate the punishment, often led to the total annihilation of the person).) And even some ordained priests had to do penance in prison "for the rest of their lives" for having rejoined their wives.

Pope Zacharias, who in the middle of the 8th century ordered life imprisonment for monks and nuns who broke their vows (supra), instigated the Gauls and Franks to expel married clerics, promising them: "thus no people will resist you, all pagan peoples will succumb to you and you will be victorious and you will have eternal life".

Subsequently, the ecclesiastical laws enacted in England under the reign of Edgar provide that "if a priest, monk or deacon has a legitimate wife before he has been consecrated, he must leave her ordination. If he continues to lie with her, his penance shall be the same as in case of murder". The religion of love put both on the same level!

The *libri poenitentiales* of that time are also very harsh towards the "incontinent". Priests who married had to atone for their sin for ten years - three of which on bread and water - were punished by suspension and excommunication, shaved, put in a sack and locked up in a convent forever. If they committed adultery, the sentence was ten years of penance, three of them on bread and water; for sexual intercourse with a nun, the penalty was twelve years, almost half on bread and water.

In the middle of the 8th century, the *Regula canonicorum* of Crodegando imposes corporal punishment on a religious who commits "murder, fornication or adultery" - once again valued in the same way - and then spends as long in prison as the bishop or his representative sees fit, without anyone being allowed to speak to him or have anything to do with him.

with him without permission. After his release, he has to do penance and remain lying on the ground at the door of the church during canonical hours until all the others have entered or left. This rule of the Bishop of Metz was taken as an example by the French Church and governed the life of the clergy for centuries.

A *poenitentiale* widely spread in the late Middle Ages, which is, according to information from the Catholics themselves, "the most important document for judging penitential practices from the Decree of Gratian to the Council of Trent" orders a ten-year sentence for the religious fornicator: first of all, he must spend three months locked up, lying on the floor and sheathed in a disciplinary sackcloth, receiving only - except on Sundays and feast days - some bread and water at night. After that, he is released from prison, but cannot show himself in public so as not to cause a "scandal" and still has to survive on bread and water for a year and a half. After that, this diet is reserved for Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until the end of the seventh year, although on Wednesdays he can commute the penance to the recitation of a psalter or the payment of a denarius. Finally, he must continue to fast on Fridays until the end of the tenth year, although he may be reinstated in his ministry before that date.

Married clergymen were deprived of all their property. and even murdered - well into the modern era. Melanchthon, one of Luther's main collaborators, writes that still They "murder honoured priests for the sake of a pious marriage". The chapter held in Pressburg in 1628, under the presidency of the archbishop of Gran, condemns to "life imprisonment (...) all those who in the future dare to marry and those who celebrate such a marriage". It also exhorts the laity not to tolerate the union between women and priests and reminds the landed gentry of their duty to "punish, both in their persons and in their property, all those who in one way or another have contributed to it". The synod of Osnabrück in 1651 makes the following admonition: "We will visit (...) day and night the houses of the suspects, and the licentious persons will be handed over to the executioner to be stigmatised with a red iron, and if the authorities are indolent or negligent, they will be sentenced to death,

will receive punishment at our hand". Bishop Ferdinand of Paderborn had a religious executed because of his sex life near the end of the 17th century.

On the other hand, the "continentals" were promised eternal consolation, and were even granted special rights guaranteed by the state, e.g. the special value of their testimony in court ⁽¹⁴⁷⁾.

The priest's wife: whipped and sold into slavery

This woman was barbarically punished, for even if she was legitimately married, she was strictly forbidden to lead a married life. If she had an extramarital affair, which was quite logical, her husband had to leave her. If he did not, he was excommunicated, as the Synod of Elvira had already prescribed. Even after the death of a cleric, his widow was forbidden to remarry, under threat of separation and excommunication for both her and the man who dared to marry her. The synod of Agde authorised the ordination of a married man only if his wife also became a nun. And the first synod of Toledo, in the year 400, stipulated that "if the wife of a cleric has sinned, her husband has the right to guard her, bind her and impose fasting on her, but not to kill her".

Outsiders were treated even more harshly. If they were suspected, they were flogged, banished or made slaves. In Spain, caning was introduced under the reign of Recesvinto; and the *Fuero Juzgo* - a code drawn up by a synod of bishops - stipulated penalties of 100 lashes for any woman, married or unmarried, who had sexual relations with a cleric (who, in turn, was interned in a prison-monastery).

In 653, the eighth "holy council" of Toledo was a high point of ecclesiastical culture; in contrast to previous synods, it prescribed that not only suspicious or disreputable women should be sold, but also legitimate women, if it was discovered that they had a bad reputation! "incontinence"!

From that moment on, the priest's relations with his wife and his other affairs, which had previously been strictly separate, were punished in the same way. In other words, it became less and less important whether the union was legitimate or illegitimate. Over time, marital relations were condemned as *fornicatio*, "impurity", "uncleanness", just like extramarital relations. Consequently, the concepts of "wife" (*uxor*) and "concubine" are more and more often identified; the word "uxor" eventually disappears altogether, and "concubine" finally designates every woman with whom the priest sleeps, i.e. also the woman to whom the priest is married, often in accordance ecclesiastical procedure.

In the mid-11th century, Leo XI made slaves in his palace of all women living with religious in Rome. And the synod of Meins (1089), presided over by Pope Urban II - the initiator of the first crusade, which culminated in the slaughter of almost 70,000 Saracens in Jerusalem, declared a saint in 1881 - ordered, in case the priest did not end his marriage, the sale of the wife as a slave by the temporal power, which was thus also involved in the question of celibacy. Archbishop Manasse II authorised Count Robert of Flanders in 1099 to seize the wives of excommunicated clerics from all his dioceses. Similar action was taken in Hungary and elsewhere. "Everywhere, particularly in Franconia, cruel scenes could be seen: the fanaticism of the monks showed its ugly face; those religious who were not able to abandon their wives and children were left with only their lives".

The Church, from Spain to Hungary and England, continued to order the wives of priests to be sold, made slaves, transferred to the bishops along with all their property, or disinherited. In addition, until modern times, it imposed on "notorious concubines" banishment, the deprivation of the sacraments, the shaving of head.

-publicly, in church, on a Sunday or feast day, in the presence of the people", as provided for in the 1231 Synod of Rouen (in the Middle Ages the discrimination was such that, according to the old Burgundian law, a slave was killed if he cut the hair of a free woman); the church threatened the priest's wife with denial of burial, with throwing out his

The bishop of Bamberg, Gottfried von Aschhausen, still appealed to the "temporal power" in the 17th century. In the 17th century, the Bishop of Bamberg, Gottfried von Aschhausen, still appealed to the "temporal power". "to enter the parishes, find the concubines, whip them publicly and arrest them".

The fate of women who were united to priests, in or out of marriage, did not concern the Catholic Church in the slightest. On the contrary, it ruined the lives of these people and their families without the slightest regard. Vast quantities of decretals and conciliar canons do not address the human rights of the bishop's wife, denying her any contact with her partner.

For Peter Damian, saint and Doctor of the Church, the women of the clergy were only Satan's bait, refuse of Paradise, poison of the spirit, swords of souls, milk for the thirsty, source of sins, principle of corruption, owls, owlets, owls, wolves, leeches, harlots, whores, whores, whores and sloughs for greasy swine ("volutabra porcorum pinquium"), among other comparisons contained in an angry and thundering parable addressed to Bishop Cunibert of Turin.

Unfortunately, no trace has been left of most of these countless individual tragedies of love and friendship, repeated from generation to generation ^[148].

Abelard, Copernicus, Bochard

The best known of all is the case of the theologian Abelard, who fell in love with and married Eloise, the niece of Abbot Fulbert, whom he had met during his lectures in Paris, and was subsequently attacked and castrated by her relatives, at the abbot's instigation.

No less significant is the story of Nicolaus Copernicus. He had been ordained a priest and received a canonry in Frauenburg Cathedral. His bishop and youthful friend Dantiscus ordered him to separate from a distant relative, Anna Schilling, with whom he had lived for a long time. "Your admonition, most illustrious sir," replied the

genius, who was then sixty-three years old, "is paternal enough, and more than paternal, I admit it and accept it heartily. As to the former instruction on the same subject, Your Grace, it was far from me to forget it. I intended to act accordingly. Although it was not easy to find a suitable person among my kindred, nevertheless, I intend to put the matter in order before Easter". But Copernicus continued to meet secretly with Anna, until, again under pressure from the bishop, he gave up these meetings as well, dying, alone and abandoned, four years later.

The case of subdeacon Bochard is shocking. He was a chantre in Laon and a canon in Tournai, and had two children by a noblewoman, sister of the Countess Joan of Flanders. Innocent III - responsible for the massacre of the Albigenians - who considered the marriage of clerics "a quagmire" excommunicated Bochard and ordered the archbishop of Rheims to renew the anathema every Sunday with the ringing of bells and burning of candles, suspending divine services wherever Bochard was until he abandoned the woman and did penance. Bochard submitted to the punishment and spent a year in the East fighting the "infidels". But when he returned home and saw his wife and children, he said: "I would rather be skinned alive than leave you". Shortly afterwards he was captured in Ghent and beheaded, and his head was paraded through all the cities of Flanders and Henaut:

"and it is that man was created for love" as the current Dutch Catechism says.

According to the Cistercian Cesareus of Heisterbach, in the 13th century the great majority of religious lived a legitimate married life or, as he put it, "in concubinage". They were responsible for families with wives and children. Only pangs of conscience stirred up by fanatics sowed discord. The wife of a priest is quoted as having thrown herself in desperation into the burning homo of a bakery ^[149].

The children of the priest

From the end of antiquity, the sons and daughters of clerics, like their wives, were increasingly deprived of their rights and treated with increasing severity. As early as 655, the ninth synod of Toledo ruled that all sons of priests "should not only not inherit from their fathers or mothers, but would become slaves for life to the church in which the fathers who begot them so dishonourably served" ("sed etiam in servitutum eius ecclesiae decius sacerdotis vel ministri ignominio nati sunt jure perenni manebunt"). Thus (in Visigothic territory) every descendant of a religious had no rights to the inheritance of his parents and became for life a servant of the Church, regardless of whether his mother was free or not.

In the 11th century, the great synod of Pavia made all sons and daughters of priests slaves for life, "whether born of free or servant women, of wives or concubines". The council, personally led by Benedict VIII, adopted the same decision: "Anathema to anyone who declares the children of such clerics - who are slaves of the Church - to be free just because they are born of free women; for whoever does so robs the Church. No servant of a church, whether cleric or layman, may acquire anything in the name or through the mediation of a free man. If he does so, he shall be flogged and imprisoned until the church recovers the documents of the transaction. The freeman who has helped him will have to fully indemnify the church or be cursed as a church thief. The judge or notary who has drawn up the deed, shall be anathematized". To understand such measures, one has to understand that at that time most of the lower clergy were descended from slaves, i.e. they neither owned property nor could make wills. Whatever these people acquired or saved belonged entirely to the bishop, who therefore had a great interest in the nullity of the priests' marriages and even more in the inability of their children to inherit. However, the descendants of church slaves were deprived of the right of inheritance from the very beginning. They were at the complete disposal of the prelates who, , did not take a dim view of a clergyman joining a

a slave. However, this was the rule, because servitude was a widespread condition. And consequently, children were attributed to the "worst off", the slave woman, and automatically became slaves.

On the other hand, if a religious who was not a free man married a free woman, their children were considered free, were recognised as having the capacity to own property and inherit, and were protected by secular law. A disgrace for Mother Church.

Pope Benedict laments that "even clerics who belong to the servitude of the Church - if they can be called clerics - since they are deprived by the laws of the right to have wives, beget children of free women and avoid the slaves of the churches for sole fraudulent purpose that the children begotten of free women may also be free, in some way". "Oh, heavens and earth!" the Pope laments, "these are they who rise up against the Church. The Church has no worse enemies. No one is more ready to persecute the Church and Christ. As long as the sons of servants retain their freedom, as they falsely claim, the Church will lose both, the servants and the goods. This is how the Church, once so rich, has become impoverished".

This is exactly the problem. There is no worse enemy of the pope than he who reduces his patrimony. For patrimony guarantees power, power guarantees feudal dominion, and feudal dominion is everything. After comparing the disobedient clerics to Epicurus' horses and pigs, and adducing, as proof of the worst corruption, that their debauchery was not discreet ("caute") but public ("publice") - very typical!-, the Vicar of Christ provides: "all sons and daughters of clerics, whether begotten by a slave or by a free woman, by the wife or by the concubine - for in neither of these cases is it permitted, nor was it (!), nor will it be - shall be slaves of the Church for all eternity" (*servi suae erunt ecclesiae in saecula saeculorum*).

The decisions of Pavia were declared binding also for Germany at the Synod of Goslar in 1019, when the pious Emperor Henry II - crowned by the Pope (and still venerated today in Bamberg) - raised them to the rank of imperial laws and aggravated them. So that judges who declared the sons of priests to be free were to be

deprived of their patrimony and banished for life, the mothers of these children would be flogged in the market and also banished, the notaries who would draw up a birth certificate or any similar document would lose their right hand... Henry the Saint!

By contrast, a Sicilian law of Frederick II, the great freethinker and rival of the pope, expressly recognised the right of inheritance for the sons of priests. And in Spain, from the 9th century onwards, at a time when concubinage - sharecropping - was spreading among the clergy, parallel to the flourishing of Arab culture, the children of this type of stable union were, in general, considered free until the 13th century. When the time came, they could inherit from their fathers and could accede to the same ecclesiastical employment that their progenitor had held.

However, a strong reaction began in Spain after the fifth Lateran council in 1215, at a time when papal centralism was increasing and the Reconquista was progressing. In 1228, the first synod of Valladolid, held under the direction of a papal legate, declared that no son of a cleric born after the fifth Lateran council could inherit from his father, and was excluded from the religious state. And if throughout the Middle Ages the children of priests continued to be attacked, without differentiating between legitimate and illegitimate origin, civil law allowed their grandchildren to be included and all their descendants to be generally harmed.

At the same time, however, the Church was denied the right of inheritance; this was the case in Sweden, which provoked Rome's complaints regarding the "savage brutality of the Swedish people" (according to Pope Honorius III, that indefatigable crusader).

The Catholic Church went so far as to prevent any family and human relationship between clerics and their children. It forbade sons and daughters to remain at their father's side and to be educated at home, it forbade religious to participate in the choice of a spouse, in the wedding or burial of their children and grandchildren. He forbade one of his daughters to marry another priest or one of his sons. Nor was it permitted for any layman to marry the daughter of a cleric. In the middle of the 16th century, the Council of Trent declared that the son of a priest could not marry the daughter of a cleric.

The custom of burying priests and their sons in the same place was stopped in 1567, and any reference to their sons was to be removed from the tombs of clerics. In 1567, the custom of burying priests and their children in the same place was stopped, and any reference to their children was to be removed from the tombs of clerics. In the 17th century the synod of Turnau ordered the public humiliation of the sons and daughters of priests and the imprisonment of the latter ^[150].

"This commitment to (...) delicacy".

In view of such a series of unheard-of barbarities, one has to be a Catholic theologian to be able to write: "Even today this commitment to prudence and firmness, to understanding and gentleness is worthy of consideration". And Pope John XXIII allowed himself to include all this among the "glorious" achievements of the Church.

Of course, other apologists accept that, on the question of celibacy, the synods and popes were "implacable", "ruthless" and "intolerant"; they excuse or justify them, but recognise that medieval man was "much more rigid", that he had become "accustomed to a certain harshness in matters of love", which is true... because he had become accustomed to the Church. The spirit of the age was the spirit of the Church! Or was not its dominance then greater than at any time before or since? It educated the youth. It imposed its characteristic stamp on morals. It often had a decisive influence on secular princes. It was also involved in the jurisdiction of the state. In Germany, every ninth person had received holy orders. One third of European soil was church property. And everyone knew... the Gospel of Love.

The centuries-long barrage of decrees, sanctions and penalties could never substantially change the circumstances of clerical life. Throughout the first millennium, marriage or concubinage were widespread practices among priests. The "renewed" papacy acted against them by resorting to terror, supported by two influential monks, the Benedictines

P. Damian and Hildebrand, who attained the papal see as Gregory of Assisi.
VII. "Both personalised the ideal of Cluny reform".

"(...) Until total annihilation".

The fanatic Fr Damian (1007-1072), adviser to several popes, cardinal, saint and Doctor of the Church, tirelessly attacked clerical marriage, "the accursed union", "that ignominious plague". He made invocations of all kinds, sounded the alarm, intrigued, railed against religious and secular potentates, wrote books and essays, travelled, appeared at synods, conjured up Popes Gregory VI, Leo IX and Nicholas II.

"Vice against nature creeps in among us like a tumour", he said instigatingly, "ravages the sheepfold of Christ like a bloodthirsty beast". And since "indifferent gentleness only provokes, no doubt, the wrath of God" he preferred to make the first move and anticipate the

"sword of divine wrath", following in this the ancient priestly praxis.

"Am I to contemplate the wounds of the soul by renouncing its cure by the knife of the word?" God forbid! So he inflamed the Milanese populace, the Pataria (infra), against the local clergy, in order to add the knife of the rabble to the knife of the word. And as Damian's thundering rants left more than one person cold, for example the influential bishop of Turin - "despite the various excellent virtues with which your holiness is adorned, there is something in it, reverend father, that displeases me greatly (...)" -, the friar emplaced the friar on a missionary's orders.)"-, the friar summoned the Countess Adelaide - a woman ("for the female breast is governed by a virile energy") completely manipulated by the monks - to persecute, together with the bishops, the religious, whose women, according to Damien, could only be described as concubines or harlots. The task should continue "until total annihilation" (*usque ad intemecionem*), which would greatly please God, according to the doctrine of the saint and doctor of the Church. And even if the pastors were indifferent, Adelaide herself would see to the extermination of the immoral priests.

The popes could not escape the influence of fanatical monks like Peter Damian and Hildebrand. From that time on, not only continence but also separation was demanded, and it was declared that clerics could not marry.

Leo IX (1049-1054), a German who, in a sense, was the initiator of the celibacy movement of the Gregorian Reformation, ordered priests to leave their wives, on pain of loss of prebends and permanent suspension from office. Leo IX himself, the French Nicholas II (1059-1061) and the Italian Alexander II (1061-1073) also forbade the faithful to attend masses celebrated by a notorious concubine; on the other hand, the Church of Antiquity had threatened with banishment anyone who did not want to hear mass celebrated by a married priest! (supra). Alexander II went so far as to instigate the faithful to persecute married religious "to the shedding of blood", after which a full-scale hunt was launched ^[151].

Twelve years of war over celibacy in Milan

Milan became the testing ground for celibacy campaigns. Its metropolitan, like almost all the prelates of northern Italy, was opposed to Rome and the Reformation, and since his church, based on the old Ambrosian tradition, had long aspired to a strong autonomy in dangerous competition with the Curia, the popes made use of the Pataria, the Milanese labourers, rag-pickers and mule-drivers, natural enemies of a clergy often related to the nobility and who exercised absolute domination over them.

It was above all monks who acted as leaders of the masses used by the popes: Arialus - gruesomely mutilated and murdered by two clerics, shortly afterwards declared a saint and martyr - Landulfus - for whom the churches of the married priests were "stables" and the services they celebrated "dog shit" (canina stercora) - or Eriembaldus, leader of the rebels recently arrived from the Holy Land, a "soldier of Christ" (Eriembaldo).

extremely energetic - as Gregory VII later said - whose wife had been involved with a priest.

In 1063, Pope Alexander II gave the signal for the beginning of the "declared civil war", and thereupon, the angry populace, accompanied by a bunch of wrathful friars, expelled the married religious from their churches. They went to meet them at the very altars, beat them or killed them, along with their wives and children. They even destroyed the archbishop's palace, and Archbishop Guido was barely able to flee, half naked, after having been badly beaten. Assaults and murders took place on a daily basis.

And even the most innocent were fleeced when Eriembaldo, who was stabbed in 1075 in the middle of a Milan street, gave permission to his army of labourers and greedy outcasts to seize the property of every cleric who did not swear continence on a set of Gospels and before twelve witnesses. At night and in secret, they hid women's clothes in the priests' houses, then raided them and exhibited the clothes found as proof of cohabitation. This was enough to justify the plunder.

In 1065, in the course of a discussion between the two parties, the presbyter Andres uselessly stressed that, by forbidding the religious to have only one woman, the legitimate woman, they were being driven into the arms of a hundred prostitutes and a thousand adulteries. Unhelpfully, he pointed to clerics from Amaldo' entourage who, although they had abandoned their wives as a hypocritical demonstration of chastity, had been branded with fire because of their atrocious lust... "You would be horrified by the civil strife, the homicides, the indescribable perjuries, the number of unbaptised children (children of priests) strangled, many of whose remains were not found until recently, during the cleaning of a water reservoir". Civil war raged in Milan until 1075.

And still under the papacy of Alexander II, the synod of Gerona, held in 1068 under the direction of his delegates, decided that "from subdeacon to priest, whoever has a wife or concubine shall cease to be a cleric, shall lose all his ecclesiastical benefices, and in the church shall be below the laity. If they disobey, no Christian shall greet them, nor eat with them, nor pray with them in church; if they fall sick, they shall not be visited, and if they die without penance or communion, they shall not be buried" ^[152].

Gregory VII: "Cursed is the man who deprives his sword of blood".

The successor of Alexander II - under the name of Gregory VII (1073-1085) - was Hildebrand - a man whom Luther called "Hollebrand" (hellfire), and Damian himself "Saint Satan" - who played a leading role in the quarrel over celibacy. Although he did not expressly declare priests' marriages null and void, in 1074 he forbade priests to have wives or to live in the company of women, threatening them, in case of disobedience, with deprivation *ab officio* and *ab beneficio*, and denying "incontinent" men even entry into the church.

In reality, Gregory VII did not bring any innovation in the fundamentals, neither in the themes nor in the punishments. The only thing new was the harshness with which he tried to enforce laws that already existed but were not usually enforced; also new was the intolerance with which he ruined the image of married priests, turning them all into "concubinaries". He even went so far as to insult a bishop's wife, calling her a "cow", a cow that the bishop had "ridden" until he had "got rid" of her.

Gregory's actions stopped at nothing. He condemned everything that did not conform to his way of thinking, he conjured up individuals as well as whole peoples, he wrote to parishes, princes, bishops and abbots. He sent his legates everywhere, well equipped with suspensions and anathemas; and it must be remembered that at that time excommunication was precisely the most feared punishment, because, according to the beliefs of the time, it meant excluding the person not only from earthly life, but also from heavenly life, casting him straight into hell, which also happened to the one who, out of compassion, took charge of the excommunicated.

Since the Pope was often unsure of his own prelates - some bishops, such as the bishops of Rheims and Bamberg, were dismissed - he not only put the rulers on a war footing, but also stirred up the masses, from whom he expected an "effect".

healthy". Freeing them from all obedience, he declared that the blessing of a married clergyman became a curse and his prayer a sin, many ceased to attend the masses of the "servants of the devil and of idols", refused to receive their sacraments, substituted earwax for oils and chrism, baptised their children themselves, spilled the "Blood of the Lord" on the ground, trampled on his "Body" and would not even allow themselves to be buried by such "heathens".

Gregory approved of any means, even murder, in order to achieve his goals. In this respect, he admitted to Bishop Burckhard of Halberstadt that he kept thinking of that quotation from Jeremiah, 48, 10:

"To kill certain clergymen was not a crime, but it was a crime for them to love their wives ^[153].

"(...) Spit by hell".

Then the clergy rebelled. They believed the Hyldebrandite orders to be contrary to the Bible and tradition, calling them foolish, dangerous and unnecessary: a heresy, in a word, which opened the door wide to perjury and adultery. "Only a fool" wrote Lambert of Hersfeid, "can force people to live like angels". And the scholastic Wenrich of Trier reported to the same Gregory VII: "Whenever I announce your orders, they say that this law has been spat out by hell, that stupidity has spread it and that madness is trying to consolidate it".

But the controversy was not conducted along purely literary lines. Bishop Henry of Chur, Archbishop John of Rouen and Siegfried of Mainz, as well as several papal emissaries, were nearly lynched by the clerics. Bishop Aitmann, whom they would have wanted to "tear to pieces with their bare hands", had to flee Passau for good, and a Gregorian emissary was apparently burned alive in Cambrai in 1077.

The excesses of the apostles of celibacy were much greater. "The clerics," reports the Bishop of Gembloux, "are exposed to scorn.

The public in the middle of the street; at the exhibition site they are greeted by wild shouting, they are even attacked. Some have lost all their property. Others have been mutilated (...) Others have had their throats slit after long torture, and their blood cries out to Heaven for vengeance. In fact, weapons were again wielded, fighting was fought in the churches themselves (later sprinkled with holy water!). Religious were killed while officiating and their wives were raped on the altars. To sum up, in Cremona, in Pavia or in Padua the same thing happened as in Milan; the riots were repeated in Germany, France and Spain. There was such chaos that people expected the end of the world. The chronicles relate that around 1212 the bishop of Strasbourg had about a hundred people of the anti-celibacy party burned.

The Pisan synod of 1135 took something like the definitive step in the institutionalisation of the unnatural. In the presence of Pope Innocent II and many bishops and abbots from Italy, Spain, France and Germany, it decided to declare marriages contracted by priests null and void. This was something completely new; previously, dissuasion had been chosen, but the validity of such marriages had never been questioned. Shortly afterwards, the second Lateran Council, held in 1139 under the presidency of Innocent III, proclaimed that all marriages contracted by clerics were null and void and, consequently, the children born of them would be considered natural and illegitimate. The Gregorian law of celibacy was thus reinforced and, in a certain sense, consummated. The conciliar decree was confirmed by Popes Alexander III (in 1180) and Celestine M (in 1198). Now the obligation of the religious was no longer continence in marriage, but bachelorhood, no more and no less ^[154].

Concubines and "prostitution canon" in place of the wife

Despite the triumph of celibacy in the 12th century, the practice remained completely anti celibate... with the only difference being that priests now often had real concubines or other types of

unions. Thus, campaigns for celibacy continued throughout the Middle Ages.

In this context, the custom was introduced of punishing clerics who lived a marital life with fines, in particular by depriving them of their income. Since it was a question of supporting the priest, and not his family or relatives, the hereditary transmission of prebends could not even be taken into consideration.

Under the papacy of Leo IX, cohabitation with a woman brought the (degraded) clergy a monetary penalty; under Nicholas II and Alexander II, cohabitation with one's own wife meant the loss of all ecclesiastical benefice revenues. The Synod of London, in 1108, bequeathed to the bishops all the movable property of priests who did not make amends, and also their wives. The synod of Valladolid, held under the presidency of a cardinal delegated by Pope John XXII (a politician with scandalous revenue concerns, who left an inheritance of nearly forty-five million marks at current exchange rates), decided in 1322 that a cleric who did not leave his concubine within two months would lose a third of his income; if he allowed two more months to pass, another third; and at the end of the third two-month period, he would be left with nothing. The penalties were even more severe for priests who cohabited with a non-Christian woman - a Moor or a Jewess.

Such decrees continued uninterrupted into the modern age, although they were certainly often not taken so seriously. On the contrary. Many prelates permitted concubinage by clerics; the fines involved were a tempting source of income. The councils forbade bishops to grant dispensations in exchange for a

"prostitution canon". But it was preferred to turn a blind eye, consenting to cohabitation in exchange for certain tribute; this practice was even consolidated in the far north of the continent, in Iceland, where any priest could live in amiance as long as he paid between eight and twelve thalers for each child he had - a custom altered only occasionally by an increase in tribute.

"Chaste priests are of no use to the Bishop (...)".

But the prelates' business did not stop there. In 1520, the One Hundred Claims of the German Nation records: "likewise, in many places, the bishops and their officials not only consent to the concubinage of priests, provided a certain sum of money is paid, but they even coerce chaste priests, those who live without a concubine, to accrue the concubinage canon, on the ground that the bishop needs the money; provided he pays it, it is the priest's business whether he remains chaste or has any concubine."

These extortions were such a plague that, as Agrippa of Nettesheim recounts, the idea took hold that one "had to pay money for a concubine, whether he had one or not, and could have one if he wanted one". Or, according to another version: "if you don't have a concubine, take one, because the bishop wants money". Or: "chaste priests are of no use to the bishop; they are even his enemies". Moreover, the poor were of no use to the Church either. "Let it be clear (!) that these kinds of mercies and dispensations are not granted to the poor, because they do not pay; and therefore they cannot be consoled". The poor have their reward in heaven. Let it be clear!

It may have been in Norway and Iceland that this peculiar cure of souls reached its extreme; there, the bishops (who always made pastoral visits accompanied by their mistresses) ended up demanding from priests living alone a sum twice as high as that paid to those living with their wives or mistresses, as they considered the former as "transgressors of parental custom" ^[155].

The Protestant attack

The reformers strongly denounced the practice of the "prostitutional canon". Thus, for example, in the course of a discussion with the vicar general of the bishop of Constance, which took place in the town hall of Zurich in 1523, Zwingli succeeded in making his point of view prevail:

"who knew nothing more scandalous than to forbid priests to marry and, instead, to sell them permission to have virgins".

A year earlier, Zwingli had already written to Bishop Hugo of Landenberg: "If we want to indulge in the pleasure of the flesh, it would be better for us to give up taking a wife. We know how much care, worry and toil marriage entails". The bishop's response was to increase the fine that every priest had to pay for each child by one guilder.

A comment from some of Zwingli's friends makes it clear why the bishop could not bear the idea of "priests taking wives. His annual income would suffer a great loss. Every year about fifteen hundred children of priests will be born in the bishopric of Constance; (...) at five guilders for each, they make a total of seven thousand five hundred guilders", (By way of comparison: the annual income of an average benefice amounted to about forty guilders). Zwingli reports that "one also has to pay the bishop for concubines (...) One has to cough up the money whether one has a concubine or not (...) If one sleeps with a pure girl, the thing costs sixteen guilders as a fine". (Approximately the price of two quality oxen.) "(...) Even nuns and beguines have their corresponding fee (...) If one wants to baptise a bastard, it also costs money, and also if one wants to legitimise him" and so on.

Protestants rejected celibacy almost from the outset, adopting consistent personal positions. Zwingli married for the first time in 1524, Luther in 1525, and finally Calvin, who, though neither priest nor monk, was the most prudish of them all.

Luther, for whom even a dog or a sow could be subjected to chastity-preserving practices - breakfasts, bedding on boards and the like.

-who declared that nothing hurt his ears more than the words nun, friar or priest and who regarded marriage as a paradise, however much misery married people suffered, used all his vehemence to dynamite the prohibition of priestly marriage or, as Scherr puts it, "the cell of celibacy, the result of combining the unnatural with disgrace, the

licentiousness and crime". And although the Reformer's assertion that "there is scarcely anything in the world more abominable than what we call celibacy" may be exaggerated, there is another sentence of his which hits the mark: "neither brothels, nor any other form of provoking the senses, nothing is more harmful than these commandments and vows devised by the Devil" [\[156\]](#).

Council disavows any anti-celibacy movement

Despite all external and internal attacks, Catholicism remained firm in its position in favour of celibacy and the profession of vows. After the battles which, following the anti-celibacy reaction of the 13th and 14th centuries, took place at the Councils of Constance (1414-1418) and Basel (1431-1439), during which, with the support of Emperor Sigismund, attempts were made without success to authorise the marriage of secular clerics, efforts were redoubled at the Council of Trent, efforts which, although favoured by some sovereigns, achieved the same result. After lengthy deliberations, on 11 November 1563, a vote was finally taken against priestly marriage, anathematizing, *nudis verbis*, anyone who advocated it.

On the following , the marriage of the clergymen was declared "abominable" and hereditary transmissions to their descendants were considered a "great impiety" and a "great crime", so that threats of excommunication and deprivation of ecclesiastical burial continued to be repeated for religious who contravened the rules, and the same punishments were imposed on indulgent visitators that they refused to impose. Of course, the refusal to allow priests to live with their mistresses or other suspicious ladies was renewed, with prelates being entrusted with the task of punishing infractions without trial ("sine strepitu et figura iudicii").

But if it was a bishop who was the offender, he was first to be admonished by a provincial synod; if he did not mend his ways, he would be suspended, and only if he continued to fornicate was he to be denounced to the Holy Father, who, depending on the degree of guilt, could punish him, if necessary,

with the loss of their prebends. Thus, while an ordinary religious was liquidated "without trial", it is striking to note the care with which the prelates were treated, who, in the worst cases and after all kinds of admonitions, were punished financially... "if necessary".

The battle against celibacy in the Modern Age

After the Council of Trent, Emperor Ferdinand I, Count Albert of Bavaria and finally Ferdinand's son, Maximilian II, argued for secular clerics to be exempted from the marriage ban. But the papacy relentlessly maintained its views, both then and later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, when attacks came from outside, from enlightened circles; from those "most depraved philosophers" (*perditissimi philosophi*), as Gregory XVI described them in his encyclical *Mirari vos* of 1832, wishing to define some of the most outstanding thinkers of his century - and not only of his century - when, in reality, he was only defining himself.... This is, moreover, totally unnecessary, because a pope is already defined by his office (as is a bishop).

On 13 February 1790 the French National Assembly dissolved religious orders, banned habits and declared vows irrational and persons free. The legislation on celibacy also ceased to be in force in France when it was repealed by the Napoleonic code.

And, because of the number of clerics who rushed to marry - about two thousand (and five hundred nuns) according to rigorous research - Pope Pius VII recognised these marriages in 1801, a concession equivalent to those made earlier by Julius III - with regard to English religious, who had been granted dispensation from their vow - and even by Innocent III, in the middle of the Middle Ages - with regard to the Eastern clergy. Whenever necessary, expediency becomes the supreme law of Rome.

Under the influence of France, the battle in favour of marriage for priests was also renewed in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century. The vicar general of Constance, Von Wessenberg (1774-1860), strongly influenced by the Enlightenment, granted many clerics dispensation from the vow of chastity; although he was proclaimed bishop, the Pope did not recognise him as such and he was eventually excommunicated.

In Freiburg, a group of lawyers, judges and professors, among them the theologian Reichlin-Meldegg, wrote a memorial for the abolition of celibacy and sent it to the archbishop for solidarity. But the latter petitioned the Grand Duke to remove Reichlin from his chair on the grounds that the scholar "treated Church history and the Holy Scriptures in a most unworthy manner, extracting from them slips which all of us have long since disapproved of, exposing them in a most ignominious manner, offensive to any pure ear". Very nice!

Anti-celibacy associations were formed in many other German dioceses, although were suppressed under the accusation of The "anti-ecclesiastical" or "disruptive and revolutionary"; "these lewd comrades" were even advised to convert to Protestantism. Only the Old Catholic Church, which disowned Rome after the first Vatican Council, authorised the marriage of its priests ^[157].

From the Theiner brothers to Pope Paul

At that time, however, the opposition to celibacy found its most important literary expression in the book by the brothers Johann Anton and Augustin Theiner, *The Introduction of the Forced Celibacy of Christian Religious and its Consequences*, a very important work in three volumes, consisting above all of an enumeration of facts, the influence of which extends to the present day. The Catholic Church has taken to hoarding most of the copies and destroying them. Anton Theiner was removed from his professorship and served as a country parish priest until, half-starved, he obtained the post of secretary at the University of Breslau, where he ended his days. His younger brother, Augustin ("I have spent more than thirty years, the

best time of my life, in the service of Rome and its curia. Jesuits not shrink from any act of force, from any violence"), he reconciled himself with the Church, becoming prefect of the Vatican Archives. However, when, during the celebration of the first Vatican Council, suspicions spread that he was providing historical materials to some leftist bishops, he lost his post and even the door that connected his home to the archives was closed.

At the end of the last century there were some currents against celibacy, especially in France and South America. At the beginning of the last century XX there was a revolt of the Bohemian clergy. Vogrinec's libel *Nostra máxima culpa* was banned by the bishops. In southern Germany, Merten's *The Slavery of Catholic Religious* was circulated. Isn't it curious that Catholic theologians themselves advise against theological studies, that they insistently warn of their danger? Isn't it curious that they shout to parents: "Keep your children away from the priesthood"? Or that they plead with youngsters: "Students, I tell you emphatically not to come"; "and you, who are at the beginning of the prison, leave without the slightest remorse"?

In 1959, the Dominican friar Spiazzi caused a real scandal when, with eye to the imminent Second Vatican Council, he criticised celibacy. -with extreme prudence". Shortly afterwards, John XXIII proclaimed that the issue was off the table. During the Council, express instruction was given to avoid an official debate on celibacy, but there were several pronouncements in favour of maintaining it. In 1965, Paul VI left no doubt as to his purpose: "not only to preserve this ancient and holy law with all our strength, but to reinforce its meaning" - among other resources, with a solemn promise of celibacy, a completely new rite that would further commit candidates and increase their scruples.

The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, which was highly praised at the time, notes that celibacy is not a requirement deriving from the nature of the priesthood (it is only an aspect of positive canon law, and there is the possibility of its definitive abolition), but it is highly desirable so that "the religious may have less difficulty in consecrating himself to God with all his heart". Repeated use is made of the

expressions "more easily", "more freely", "with fewer obstacles", "in a better disposition". Power is what counts; not a word is said any more about the anti-sexual motivation, about "ritual impurity", about the "folly of touching at the same time, in the sacrifice of the Mass, the body of a harlot and the most pure body of Christ", to use the vehement phrase of Gregory VII. That is what had worked for centuries, but who believes in it any more? (Soon even dogmas will be decided by demoscopic procedures; for whoever wants to retain power cannot lose the masses).

In 1967, Paul VI reconfirmed the traditional position in his encyclical *Sacerdotalis coelibatus*; despite the "worrying lack" of priests, which, in any case and judging by the pastoral letters, seems to have intensified the discussions. There was a worldwide wave of protest. Thousands of priests stopped officiating or hung up their habits for good, despite the public discrimination and the strong psychological pressures that such a decision still entails today. Renowned theologians rebelled. In the Netherlands, some seminarians denied the "bishop of Rome" the right to deal with matters outside his diocese. "The Church of Rome looks like a madhouse. But nowadays, for most lay people the "dignity" of religious is less important than their human existence. Even in Catholic Bavaria two thirds of the citizens are in favour of the abolition of celibacy, a percentage that rises to four fifths in the rest of the federal territory ^[158].

Crisis of celibacy or agony of Christianity?

However, the "crisis of celibacy", which is so much in vogue today, is a crisis of Catholicism, a crisis of Christianity, plain and simple, of that Christianity which has long since lost all credibility. Celibacy has been of great benefit to the Catholic Church at the cost of immense human sacrifice, but it has also harmed it. It contributed to the splitting of the Eastern Church and Protestantism, which remained in the same place for a long time.

favourable to the marriage of priests. And today, the disadvantages of the ban are almost as great as its advantages.

However, it is not only ultra-conservatives who warn of the dangers of making changes. The same Karl Rahner S.J., who rather passes for a "progressive", defends the medieval tradition *in punelo coelibatus*. In an "open letter" to a "beloved brother" Rahner, recipient of the Sigmund Freud prize *pro piis meritis* ("*difficile est satiram non scribere*"), slipped so far below his level that he himself was "dissatisfied". After a lot of lazy pretexts, basically what he had to say to the "beloved brother" led to this devout platitude:

"Read the Scriptures, penetrate again and again, praying them to yourself, into the words with which Jesus urges us to follow Him; place yourself, in your concrete existence, before the Cross of Christ. Surrender yourself, truly and openly, to the Cross and Death of the Lord. Assume your solitude (...) Think not only of yourself and your happiness, but first of all of the others whom you must serve as a priest" ^[159].

Loneliness, cross and death for the priest. And for "the others" to whom "must serve" honours and power! (or does it serve... the people?)

More dangerous than the old-fashioned sermons of the celibacy patrons are the arguments of their opponents. Since the shortage of priests is increasing - due to critical rationalism (or, in stupid pastoral language, due to "widespread religious ignorance") - Rome, in order to multiply her advantages, abandons an institution by which she has ruled for so many centuries, which has brought disgrace to generations of clerical (and not only clerical) families, which has dragged countless people into a life of hypocrisy.

CAPÍTULO 17

THE MORALITY OF CELIBACY

We regret (...) that some are going so far as to consider that it is the purpose of the Catholic Church or would be to her advantage to renounce that which for centuries has her hallmark of glory and that of her priests: the ecclesiastical commandment of celibacy.

JOHN XXIII^[160]

It is difficult to find a single writer of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance who does not assume that most religious, from the highest prelates to the humblest friar, were rotten to the core.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

So, having reached the diaconate, they put four, five or even more concubines in their beds every night.

SAINT BONIFACE^[161]

The fact that God calls the canons "goats" is due to the fact that their bodies stink because of their lust.

MATILDA OF MAGDEBURG

They are more immoral than the laity.

INNOCENT III

They end up corrupted like cattle in manure.

HONOUR III

that "the whole clergy wallow in the vices of drink and lewdness".

BAUMGAERTNER, Bavarian
delegate to the Council of Trent (1562)

Meanwhile, on the Catholic side, celibacy - or bachelorhood - resumed its quiet march. A visit to the convents of Lower Austria in 1563 found: nine concubines, two wives and nineteen children living with the nine friars of the Benedictine monastery of Schotten; seven concubines, three wives and fourteen children with seven priests of the monastery of Neuburg; nineteen children of the forty nuns of Aglar, and so on. This was called celibacy.

OSKAR PANIZZA^[162]

Penances in a shared bed

The inescapable consequences of the ascetic practices celibacy entailed soon resulted in a curious yet enduring pattern of fully institutionalised relationships, the so-called 'Joseph marriage'; the pairing of a single man, most often a clergyman or monk, with a nun, *gyn syneisaktos* or *mulier subintroducta*: a

"spiritual wife". Such an institution, widespread in the third and fourth centuries, offered a seductive possibility of union to those devout ascetics that included the most intimate of communications: that of the bed. And it also included the possibility of all the more glorious victory, as they liked to emphasise by invoking biblical examples.

The pagans soon got the better of him. And Christians, too, came to distrust these fighters. For example, bishop Paul, metropolitan of Antioch for seven years, had "forsaken

a woman, probably, in order to exchange her for two beautiful, blooming girls", with whom he lived and whom he even took with him on his pastoral journeys. And at the synod of Antioch (in 268) there was a rumour that many had fallen into these excesses.

"Old virgins preferred to choose young men with the alibi of maternal feelings towards their spiritual son, which later turned into others that were just as comforting, if not more so". The ladies of the nobility ignored their husbands under the pious pretext of continence, and cavorted with the common people and even with slaves. There were too many monks who were ascetics only in habit.

It was not always easy to unmask these saints, because they denied everything, "unless they were betrayed by their children's bellowing", as Tertullian says. Otherwise, even a physical examination was not definitive proof, as Bishop Cyprian (died 258) already knew, who in any case demanded the intervention of the midwife, with the proviso that one also sinned with parts of the body that could not be checked.

St. Jerome calls the pious penitents "wives without marriage", "concubines", "harlots", or "pestilence" and notes, somewhat stung: "they do not leave the house, do not leave the bedroom, often do not even get out of bed, and call us suspicious if we suspect there is anything wrong". And St. Chrysostom, author of a double treatise against the chaste marriage of men and women, complains that "now the Devil has brought things to a point where it would almost be better if there were no more (consecrated) virgins".

Penances shared with a partner were so popular that a writing attributed to Cyprian states that ascetics preferred death to separation. It took the Church at least twenty synodal decrees and a great deal of patience to put an end to this practice. In 594, Pope Gregory I still had to renew the previous prohibitions ^[163].

Drinking as compensation?

Indeed, clerical and religious orgies had been taking place since the 3rd century. The Synod of Elvira, in 306, reports the existence of quarrelsome bishops, priests and deacons, as well as "adulterous clerics' wives", "infanticidal catechumens" and "paedophiles". St. Jerome mentions some of his state who had become priests for the sole purpose of "being able to look more freely on women". St. Basil, along with thirty-two other prelates, laments the wickedness of bishops and parish councillors, which caused many Christians to stop going to mass and prefer to go away from the cities to pray in the company of their wives and children and without any clerical intervention.

Nor was it unusual for priests to begin Mass in a state of drunkenness. St. Augustine deplores the excesses committed daily at the Eucharist, the alcoholism and the excessive eating. Until the 17th century, the councils censured the priests' fondness for drinking; it was a "widespread" custom, according to a modern Catholic. "The Middle Ages, i.e. the ethylic intoxication of Europe", writes Nietzsche. And one wonders whether, in this way, many did not make up for what they missed out on sexually.

Bishop Droctigisilo of Soissons, whom Saint Gregory of Tours praised because no one had ever been able to accuse him of adultery (!), drank until he literally lost his senses (for which an archdeacon was held responsible and burned). Bishop Eonius of Vannes, who could not even move when he had finished drinking, was once celebrating in Paris (you know what a mass is worth) when, after giving a loud whinny, he collapsed at the altar and had to be removed by those present. Bishop Cautinus, another fond drinker, had to be carried out of the banquets by four people. Some anchorites were also notorious drinkers.

With the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth, we have news of church taverns, with dice games, drunkenness and various obscenities, or of masses during which dogs and dogs were frolicking in the church.

prostitutes, or of "obscene attitudes in front of the ", "dirty and frenzied songs" and even homicides ^[164].

"(...) Much worse than the laity".

The examples of bishops and archdeacons are bad, says an old Norwegian source; "they seduce more humble women than other less intelligent and educated people, and are not ashamed to give false witness and swear false oaths". The well-known letter of St. Boniface to Pope Zacharias mentions some clerics who "every night into their beds four, five or even more concubines (...) And in these conditions they become priests, even bishops".

At the Synod of Troselé, which met in 909, its director, Archbishop Hervé of Rheims, launched a direct accusation against the bishops when those assembled confessed that "the plague of lust - and this cannot be said without shame and great pain - so stains the Church that the priests, who were supposed to keep others from the corruption of this disease, are rotting in filth". In the tenth century, it is assured of England "that the religious are in no way superior to the laity; on the contrary, they are much worse". And in Italy, Bishop Raterio of Verona acknowledges that if he were to suspend all priests who break the precept of chastity, he would be left with only children. "To put it in a phrase, the reason for the corruption of the people is the clergy. Our religious, unfortunately, are much worse than the laity".

Romania, wife of the margrave of Tuscany, succeeded in having her lover, John, promoted first to archbishop and then to pope (John X, 914-928). He died in prison at the instigation of his sister, Marozia, who had an affair with Pope Sergius III and promoted the fruit of this love affair to the status of Vicar of Christ: John XI, pope for twenty-five years, was, however, quickly imprisoned and liquidated by John XII, who was already pope at eighteen, slept with his own sisters and ran an unrivalled white slave trade, until, in 964, he died in the throes of adultery. Pope Boniface VII, who had ordered the strangling of his

predecessor Benedict VI, who was himself assassinated in 985, was reputed to be a vermin of the worst kind, whose baseness exceeded that of the rest of mortals, Benedict IX (1032-1045) - who reached the chair of St. Peter at the age of fifteen by means of bribes, lost it later by the same procedure and was probably also the poisoner of Pope Clement II - must have entertained the idea of marrying or, perhaps, according to other sources, did in fact do so ([165]).

A harem instead of marriage

In the middle centuries of the Middle Ages, the strict celibate regime to which the clergy were subjected only served to further increase clerical debauchery.

The fact that the Spanish synods forbade women to live in the vicinity of a convent needs no further comment. The provost Gerhoh reports that the canons of the diocese of Salzburg were running "from house to house" and, lacking a legitimate wife, they tried to sleep, almost with impunity, with the wives of all the others. "None of them is denounced", comments the author of the *Historia calamitatum Salisburgensis ecclesiae*, accusing the religious, "since they all do the same thing". Henry of Melk, Austrian confrere and poet, reflects how "they belie with their bad life the chastity they praise in their sermons". And in Germany, the Cistercian Caesarius of Heisterbach states that, in the face of clerical persecution, "no female existence" was safe: "the nun is not protected by her state, nor the Jewish girl by her race; maidens and ladies, harlots and noble ladies are equally threatened. Any place and any time are good for lust: some indulge in it in the middle of the field, when they go to the hermitage; others in church, when they hear confession. He who is content with a concubine almost seems honourable".

In fact, it is common to read stories of religious who have several concubines at the same time or who have children by four or five different women, who walk around with a pious demeanour during the day and fornicate at night.

under the pulpits, who have relationships with abbesses and nuns, relationships from which daughters are born, with whom they then father other children. It is also often mentioned that the clergy condemned women who resisted their desires as heretics, a method used, above all, by the heretic hunters themselves. The notorious Inquisitor Robert le Bougre (in the 13th century) threatened women who did not submit to him with the stake. For his part, the inquisitor Foulques de Saint-George had the most stubborn women imprisoned as heretics in order to achieve his aims.

The literature of the full and late Middle Ages is full of priests and monks eager for young girls and prioresses and nuns no less eager for men.

Most of the time it was the clerics who acted as seducers and the preferred place for the beginning of their love affairs was the church, where they tried to bend the will of the object of desire with gifts and coins (twenty, eighty, one hundred pounds)... including the mendicant friars. Perhaps this may have contributed to the fact that religious were valued - and even preferred - as lovers; of course, their discretion, maintained in their own interest, was also valued.^[166]

"(...) Like cattle in dung".

Most religious of a certain hierarchy were less committed. A certain 11th-century bishop of Fiesole lived surrounded by a flock of concubines and children; Bishop Iuhell of Dol married publicly and endowed his daughters with ecclesiastical goods. During the papacy of Innocent III (1198-1216), the archbishop of Besançon, whose extortions had driven the clergy of his diocese to extreme poverty, had a relationship with a blood relative, the abbess of Reaumair-Mont, and impregnated a nun, as well as sleeping with the daughter of a religious, as was public and notorious. Around the same time, the Archbishop of Bordeaux, a personage who was dedicated to

looting all the churches, monasteries and private homes in the surrounding area with a band of thieves.

In the same century, Gregory X (1271-1276) - a pope who, by the way, inspired the Holy Spirit in the conclave, depriving the cardinal electors of food - sent the following admonitory letter to Bishop Henry of Lüttlich: "We have learned, not without great sorrow in Our mind, that you have incurred in simony, fornications and other crimes, that you have given yourself completely to pleasure and to the concupiscence of the flesh, that after your elevation to the episcopal dignity you have had several sons and daughters. You have also publicly taken as a concubine an abbess of the order of St. Benedict and, in the midst of a banquet, you have shamelessly admitted before all present that you had had fourteen children in the space of twenty-two months (...) To make your perdition more irremissible, you have confined under guard in a garden a nun of St. Benedict, who was followed by other women (...) When, after the death of the nun of St. Benedict, you had a child in the garden of a nun of the order of St. Benedict, you had a child with a nun of St. Benedict (....).) When, after the death of the abbess of a convent in your jurisdiction, you proceeded to the election of a replacement, you annulled her and appointed as abbess (...) the daughter of a nobleman with whom you had committed incest and who recently gave birth to your son to the scandal of the whole region (...).(.) Moreover, you still have the three sons you have fathered with this same nun (...) You also have one of the two daughters you have fathered with this nun (...)" Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

"It is quite common for bishops to have children, many or few". says the Franciscan missionary Bertoldo of Regensburg. A certain Henry, bishop of Basel, left twenty offspring at his death; the bishop of Lüttlich - who, it must be said, was deposed - had sixty-one.

So the Church assemblies had every reason to denounce the way of life of the secular and regular clergy: corruption, debauchery, opulence and idleness had to be corrected,

"because the laity are scandalised by it" (!). In the 13th century, Pope Innocent III says that priests are "more immoral than the laity".

Honorius III assures that "they are corrupt and lead to perdition to peoples"; Alexander IV states "that the people, instead of being corrected by the religious, are completely corrupted by them". *Confessio*

propria est omnium optima probatio. Clerics rot "like cattle in dung" another precious papal sentence from the 13th century; in the middle of the 13th century, the Dominican and later Cardinal Hugo de Saint Cher would say at the conclusion of the Council of Lyon (1251): "My friends, we have been of great profit to this city. When we arrived, we found only three or four brothels; at the time of our departure we left only one. But this extends from one end of the city to the other" ^[167].

Frilluhald Klerka or the blossoming of celibacy in the North

In the Scandinavian countries, the custom of clerics marrying was quite old and apparently not contested by anyone.

The Gregorian decrees were not enforced, if they got there at all. But, in the 12th century, not even Iceland was spared the strong pressure from the papacy to impose celibacy... with the usual consequences. In Norway - where Bishop Arnis Kristenrecht explained that "no such men may marry: friars, priests, deacons, deacons, subdeacons, men deprived of understanding or castrated rams (eunuchs)" - the marriage of priests was replaced by a form of pairing that found wide acceptance, called "frilluhald klerka": progress, in a sense, though not from the point of view of Christian morality.

In Sweden, most priests and bishops were the sons of priests. But when Rome imposed celibacy, the situation evolved as everywhere else. In 1281, the Synod of Telge noted that "the evil of lasciviousness" was so widespread among God's servants that "few or none are free from it".

Denmark offers the same picture. After the introduction of the papal decrees, the sex life of the clergy (and in particular of the prelates) flourished to such an extent that, in order to protect their wives and daughters, the peasants of Skåne demanded by force of arms that the priests remarry.

"As long as the peasant has women (...)"

In the rest of Europe, where the consolidation of celibacy led to all sorts of sexual excesses on an ever-increasing scale, Christian laypeople frequently supported clerical concubinage and demanded a "companion in vice", or a "spiritual cow", for clerics.

"shepherds of souls". Pius XII himself reports that the Frisians "do not allow priests to be admitted to their ministry unless they are married, in order that the beds of other people remain spotless". "As long as the peasant has women, the priest does not need to marry", says a medieval proverb.

On the threshold of the 15th century, Nicolas de Clemanges, archdeacon at Lisieux, wrote: "Today, if someone is lazy and fond of opulent idleness, he hastens to become a priest. Then they are diligent in visiting brothels and taverns, where they spend all their time drinking, eating and gambling; when they are drunk, they shout, duel, riot and curse the name of God and the saints with their impure lips, until, finally, they pass from the embraces of their venal lovers to the altar". On another occasion, the same theologian describes how bishops devote themselves day and night to hunting, gambling, dancing and banquets; how they extort, fornicate and pardon the greatest crimes from their clergy in exchange for money. "Decent and cultured people get no ecclesiastical dignity; they would point out the evils of the Church. The bishops are immoral (...) But the best thing is not to name all the evils so that those who follow us do not know anything about this situation". Dietrich von Münster, vice-chancellor of the University of Cologne in the 15th century, made a similar statement: only the most corrupt people, "stinking corpses", sought prelatures. Geiler von Kaysersberg, whose homilies were much celebrated, also believed that the clergy were "rotten from the top to the bottom"; according to him, they were not only fornicating with

known prostitutes, wives, widows and young girls, but also with men and animals: "who is there who does not wallow in the mire and filth? Sebastian Brant puts it like this:

*And although no one would trust them with one of
their cows, we readily allow them to take care of
souls.*

In 1403, after a half-year stay in Rome, Matthew of Krakow, professor of theology and bishop of Worms, wrote an unusually pungent treatise. *Of the filth of the Roman Curia*. In 1410 the cardinal delegate Baldassare Cossa was promoted to the papacy under the name of John XXIII. In addition to having a passionate relationship with his brother's wife, he was known to have slept with two hundred widows and maidens while in Bologna. At the Council of Constance (1415) - where he was deposed, although he was eventually allowed to continue to act in the service of God's empire as a cardinal - the reading of the chronicle of his papal days was reduced to fifty exploits, "out of respect for the listeners". This deference to the ears of the ears of the frightened prelates is all the less understandable in view of the fact that, as the city chronicler Ulrich von Richenthal relates, the great council which sent Hus to the stake was attended - besides the pope, more than three hundred bishops and the Holy Spirit - by seven hundred harlots, not counting those who accompanied the clerics ^[168].

All this might be a vastly exaggerated portrayal, befitting the mentality and literary custom of the time. But, in fact, these expressions of aversion, shame and disgust were only what they purported to be. Why should the clerics incriminate themselves? Why should their testimony coincide with that of the laity? And the synodal decrees, which insistently condemned concubinage and all kinds of sexual variants, beginning with relations with mothers and children and ending with bestiality? And the synods, are they not a permanent recognition, *expressis verbis*, of the uselessness of their own orders?

Is fornication only a sin in the bishopric of Spira?

Let us look, for example, at Spira. There the bishop confirms the validity of the decrees on celibacy for four consecutive years, between 1478 and 1478.

and 1481, and imposes heavy fines on religious who live in concubinage, given that with it, "without doubt, they gravely offend the Most High and their patron saint, the Immaculate and Most Pure Virgin Mary". In 1482, the bishop again urged his clerics "to live chastely, by the mercy of God and the passion of Christ" and again threatened them with severe punishment. This was repeated in 1483, 1484, 1485, 1486, 1487, 1488, and all the years between 1493 and 1503, with the exception of 1495. In 1504, Bishop Ludwig claims again that he had repeated the rules against impudence and concubinage so strongly that stones, columns and walls could proclaim it; soon after, he gives up his soul and the successor acts as his predecessor had done: he convenes one synod per year between 1505 and 1513, presents the old complaints and the same orders and has to hear from the mouth of his own priests that "fornication is only a sin in the bishopric of Spira".

Indeed, if it was not, it seemed so, judging by the exuberance of sexual life, especially in Rome. Sixtus IV, a former general of the Franciscans who as pope built the Sistine Chapel and instituted the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1476 (as well as supporting Torquemada as inquisitor), indulged in almost unheard-of excesses. His nephew Cardinal Pietro Riario, holder of four bishoprics in one patriarchate, went from bed to bed (literally) until his death.

Sixtus' successor, Innocent VIII (1484-1492), who arrived at the Vatican accompanied by two sons, openly rebuked a papal vicar who had given the order that all clerics must abandon their concubines.

Innocent's successor, Alexander VI (1492-1503), who according to Savonarola was "worse than an animal", arrived at the Vatican with four children and, once there, showed his great fondness for orgies held in the family circle. On one occasion, after a banquet, he organised a dance with fifty meretrices ("cortegianae"), who first danced clothed and then naked, then had to crawl on all fours, wiggling as suggestively as possible, and, finally, copulated with the servants in full view of His Holiness, his son and daughter; a prize was even set for the one who "knew carnally" the most girls,

prize which was formally awarded to the winner. The Pope, who considered the possibility of making the ecclesiastical state a hereditary monarchy, had relations with his daughter Lucrezia, who also slept with his brother and who, while still a teenager, had a child that Alexander, in a bull, passed off as his own, to be attributed later, in second bull, to his son Caesar. He also commissioned a painting of the Mother of God with the Pope at her feet, in which he is depicted with one of his hetairas, the beautiful Giulia Farnese, known as the "Wife of Christ".

The madonnas of the prelates or who has the biggest member?

What could have prevented, for example, the well-known relations of Albert II of Mainz (1514-1545), cardinal and indefatigable indulgence merchant, with his two concubines, Káthe Stolzenfeis and Ernestine Mehandel? Dürer immortalised them both as Lot's daughters. Grünewald did the same with Káthe, portrayed as "Saint Catherine in the Mystic Marriage". And Lukas Cranach painted Ernestine as "St. Ursula" and the cardinal himself as "St. Martin.

There were more hierarchs who had their beloved ones painted as Virgins, hanging the portraits in churches for the edification of the people; Archbishop Albert of Magdeburg put a courtesan in an aedicule and organised a procession to parade her as a "living saint".

The lower clergy did not have geniuses who perpetuated their beloved. But they did have women. And often, as the Protestant theologian and poet Thomas Naogeorgius recounts, they brought to the fore obscenities which "a brothel could not tolerate and which, surely, no commoner would utter". Bets were also placed between clerics and laymen on the size of each other's members.

After 1,500 years of Christianity, the imperial councillor Friedrich Staphylus, a Catholic convert, knew only the odd

religious "who is not married publicly or secretly (...) The prurient excesses of priests are endless", which the Catholic canonist Georg Cassander confirms almost word for word.

After the Trentine reforms, clerics continued to copulate indefatigably, even in the most religious regions. In 1569, the archbishop of Salzburg confessed that the celibacy laws had given

"The result is very rarely (...), so that the clergy is mired in the mire of the nefarious delight, which has become for them a habit (!)". The protocol of the visit of Bishop de Brixen to the "most faithful land of Tyrol" reports in 1578 that, in about sixty parishes, there were more than a hundred concubinaires: "canons, chaplains, parish priests, vicars".

At the end of the 16th century and in the 17th century, religious "hired" young women whom they called "cooks" or "mistresses", or passed them off as relatives. But there are many others who live with their wives without any concealment and who want to be treated in accordance with their dignity, such as

"canonesses", "deanesses" and similar titles. In many German dioceses

-From Breslau to Strasbourg, concubine marriage was common practice; in the bishopric of Constance, almost every clergyman had a concubine, as in the Rhineland. The bishopric of Osnabrück found in 1624-25 that the majority of the clergy lived in concubinage. In the reports of the visitators of Bamberg it is stated that "no one admits to being a concubine, although the parish priests of Pautzenfeld, Drosendorf and Reuth, and the dean himself do not stray far from their concubines". The Bishop of Bamberg orders women to be publicly flogged and imprisoned.

Incidentally, "most of the other dignitaries turned a blind eye, because they themselves fornicated even more frantically". The bishop of Basel allowed himself to keep concubines and children, the archbishop of Salzburg lived with the beautiful Salome Alt, "probably in conscientious matrimony", as they put it today, and boasted of his fifteen children (probably fathered solely for reasons of conscience). And in 1613, almost all the parish priests and chaplains of the archdiocese had concubines and children ^[169].

As if things were going well

In the 18th century, diocesan and national synods became more and more infrequent, and so did the opportunities to recall the laws on continence. The aim was to spread the impression that things were going well and that most amorous affairs that did not entail any unpleasant consequences were ignored.

In any case, the Salzburg consistory still notes in 1806 that "for some time now, a greater moral laxity has been observed among the clergy of our diocese than in the past". And at the end of the 19th century, in one Italian diocese, there was not a single priest, "including the bishop, who did not lead a notorious marital life". At the same time, it was said that the immorality of the South American clergy was unparalleled and that the clergy there acted "as if the excesses were own business". A Catholic theologian acknowledged in 1889 that in Peru "there are only a few religious who do not live in notorious concubinage". And the theologians Johann and Augustin Theiner collected compelling material on child seduction, sadism, abortions and crimes of passion of 19th century clerics and monks.

In a memorandum published as long ago as 1970 and addressed to all clergymen of the diocese, the Munich Circle - which is not exactly an anti-clerical institution - spoke of the "secret marital relations" and the forced "insincerity" of the Catholic priest. But when someone wanted to document this "insincerity" more rigorously, he was subjected to all sorts of intrigues. This is what happened in 1973 to Hubert Mynarek, former dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Vienna, by then already separated from the Church, who saw his book *Lords and Servants of the Church*, once printed and distributed, withdrawn from circulation by its first publisher, while the second publisher was content to suppress the passages on celibacy.

Around the same time that Mynarek was providing headlines in the press and his revelations - most of them surprisingly harmless - were being met with a barrage of court injunctions and threats of lawsuits from his former colleagues, theologian Fritz Leist

a Catholic and professor of Philosophy of Religion in Munich, published a selection of anonymous confessions collected from some seventy priests, friars and nuns, some practising and others already integrated into civil life. This volume - which went virtually unnoticed, although it contained everything that the public had hoped to find in Mynarek's, and would not have found if the chapter on celibacy had appeared - illustrates in an extraordinarily expressive and detailed way what clerical chastity is today [170].

A happy Rhenishman

Right at the beginning of the book, a "priest in body and soul", almost sixty years old and quite easy-going, acknowledges, successively, "a very beautiful love story", "then an affair of a more sexual nature", "then frequent relations with prostitutes" and, finally, "a love affair of a more sexual nature",

"I did not have to go out of the confessional. My Rhenish temperament helped me to overcome many obstacles. Finally, he managed to befriend a "married woman of great moral virtues. The friendship turned into a passionate love that has lasted for ten years and is still the same as at the beginning", although, unfortunately, "with many restrictions, because the woman has a husband and children".

Nevertheless: "I am still a priest in body and soul", "I am still as enthusiastic as a young chaplain", "personally, at no time in my life have I ever experienced a priestly crisis"... A happy Rhenishman!

As chaplain, a priest - now forty-six years old - revealed to the housekeeper of his parish that "a need was pressing" and the housekeeper, then thirty-two years old, confessed that she "wanted to save him". It went on for fifteen years and apparently always happened "in the car, in a hurry". In the end, this celibate found "personal fulfilment" with his secretary, who "once even got pregnant (miscarried). Since then, we have loved each other madly.

Another clergyman recounts that, during the period of his studies alone, he met at least a dozen religious who had had sexual lapses; some of them were punished with prison sentences of several years.

A young woman, before starting her studies in "Theology and Didactics of Religion", is involved in the subject from a propaedeutic-practical point of view. "I am twenty-two years old and for the last four years have been having a relationship with a forty-five year old vicar".

A fifth testimony is that of a religious who captivates his chosen one with phrases that are almost a carbon copy of that hymn from the Song of Songs that the Jesuit Peronne presented in 1848 as proof of the Immaculate Conception of Mary: "Yes, you are beautiful, my friend, you are beautiful (...) and there is no sin in you (...)", or a little more simply: "you are beautiful and still without a single wrinkle", "what an extraordinary woman! And her testimony:

"He pressed me against him and made the sign of the cross (...)" ; "after a night of love, he could say incredible things to me". Surely even more incredible would be the things he would say during the day, when he was a spiritual counsellor and delivered furious homilies against immorality. "Always the moral condemnation of others (...)" and then she would hear him whisper to her "how beautiful I was and how he wanted me and that the night before he had an erection just thinking about me". "We would go to bed. But before that we would read a book about sex (...)" "He was so passionate that, at the moment of orgasm, I was afraid he was going to die".

Yes, yes, as Cardinal Joseph Hoffner says: "in today's world, priestly celibacy, lived as a renunciation for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, is a singularly striking sign which indicates to the believing community the true goal of its pilgrimage" ([171](#)).

From renouncing the limb... to renouncing life

Another girl, now 26, entered a convent at 15 because the nuns had "excited" her and because "God wants to have beautiful women".

Actually, she didn't have too many, so the newcomer soon saw how God, i.e. a priest, "embraced" her and "gave her medals of different saints". Medals with magical powers, since: First, a priest thirty years older writes that he "dreams of me and desires me" and insists that "I must find a room somewhere, even in a hotel, where we can spend at least one day". "He tried to kiss and caress me and once put my hand on his member (...)". Secondly, a Jesuit in his forties: "one night, while I was in a garden next to the convent, he approached me; we had never met before (...), he wanted us to spend the night together (...) Later, this priest hung up his habits because he had had a child with another nun". Third: "He took every opportunity to be with me (...) Once he invited me to his room (...) He wanted us to go to bed (...) In a very seductive voice, he told me that he loved me, that he would give his life for me (...) And then he had to say mass (...)".

Another nun who had also entered the convent at fifteen years of age For years he was unhappy because there he could "be everything except a person" and had to "completely repress my own self" and "swallow everything". In 1971, when he was finally at home, he wanted to open his soul to a clergyman he knew. "No sooner had I opened my mouth than I began to cry and he embraced me, kissed me and, in no time at all, had undressed me and was on top of me. After two hours of him doing whatever he wanted, he asked me if I had reached orgasm".

All of these cases - which, as the Catholic editor stresses, are "representative of innumerable "incidents" kept secret" - will perhaps be unbelievable to those sections of Catholics whose mentality is evidenced by the almost unspeakably insulting letters Mynarek received on leaving the Church ^[172]. For the rest of us, the sexual frolic of the religious is quite natural (which is why I myself did not bat an eyelid when, recently, a lady, in a dramatic tone, offered me all the intimate correspondence she had maintained, over a long period of time, with a Jesuit famous among us for his pleas in favour of chastity).

Sighs of celibates and canonical age

So, to some extent, it is grotesquely charming to find in Leist's survey (overlooking his numerous references to neurotic disorders, incurable depression, epileptic seizures, ulcers and suicide attempts) a clergyman who laments that his maid (aged forty-eight), 'although she is a diligent woman and has not yet become a harpy, lacks any erotic attraction'. The following complaint is equally curious: "You see, for almost three years now I have had to live with a servant - my sister is married - who is sexually repulsive to me, so I avoid her whenever I can (...)".

Does the Church merely tolerate such relationships, or does it perhaps indirectly support them? The latter possibility is not disproved by the canonical prescription that forbids religious to accept into their homes "The law allows them to live in the company of relatives, including nieces, and women who "are not likely to arouse suspicion, both because of their upright way of life and their older age (between thirty-five and forty years)".

In view of , who is to say that the Church does not have a sense of humour! And generosity! And sincerity, if one thinks of what a South American bishop recently declared at the Catholic Congress in Essen, according to which, in his extensive diocese, fourteen out of fifteen priests lived with their female servants as they would live with a wife... Of course, Paul VI rightly called celibacy, not long ago, "a sign and spur to pastoral love" and "a source of fruitfulness in the world".^[173]

With mother, sister or daughter

Despite condemning it, the Church could not prevent the incontinence of the clergy. On the contrary. Religious became fond of sexual specialities more

unusual, for example, to intimate relationships with close family members.

For the same reason, in 753, the Synod of Metz ordered that "if a religious indulges in lust with a nun, or with her mother, her sister, etc., he shall be deprived of his ecclesiastical dignity, if he has it, or beaten, if he belongs to the lower clergy". In 888, a synod held in Mainz acknowledged that "very many crimes" had been committed, for certain "priests have lain with their own sisters and had children with them". In 1208, Golo, an itinerant legate in France, acknowledges that, "by temptation of the Devil", there are religious who "frequent their mothers and other relatives". And the synods of the modern age make similar statements. The same can be said of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, of John XXII, for example, or of Alexander VI, of the archbishops of Auxerre and Besançon in the time of Innocent III. And much earlier, Lanfredo, a German bishop, fornicated with his very young daughter.

A courtier is a manciple

Another frequent occurrence has been the fondness of priests for their own , men and young boys; , homosexuality has been "ordinary". It began in antiquity and has never disappeared. The medieval penitential books continually speak of the "sodomy" of the religious and threaten them with penances lasting years and even decades. In 1513, speaking before Leo X and the Lateran Council, Count Della Mirándola remarked - to no avail - that young men who had already been raped against nature and who had even been trained by their parents as "prostitutes" were being educated for ecclesiastical careers until, at the end, once ordained priests, they indulged in "homosexual prostitution". Ulrich von Hütten ironically comments: "the Romans trade in three kinds of gender: Christ, ecclesiastical fiefdoms and women. And would to God that they traded only in women and did not deviate so often from their nature".

The scribes, ushers and cooks of the Curia - who were paid from ecclesiastical benefices - were often also "courtiers". A bishop of Trier who was asked what the word meant gave the following definition: "a courtier is a young man and a courtesan a young woman; I know this very well, because I myself was one of them in Rome". That being the case, it may be that one's career was due more to a handsome backside than to a shiny head. Perhaps this was the case with Inozenzo del Monte, keeper of Julius III's monkeys, who, despite the protests the decision provoked, became a cardinal at the age of seventeen. For his part, Bishop John of Orleans was the favourite of the Archbishop of Tours. The story was sung in the streets and John himself joined in the chorus. But, of course, things were not always so much fun. With the lower clergy there was almost never any sympathy when the case came into the public domain. "On Saturday, 2 March 1409, four priests, Jörg Wattenlech, Ulrich von Frey, Jakob der Kiss and Hans, parish priest of Gersthofen, were chained for sodomy in a cage by the tower of Perlach; the following Friday they were still alive; they died of starvation some time later." A layman involved in the events, the tanner Hans Gossenioher, was burned alive ^[174].

Intimacies with animals

It is especially in the penitential books of the Middle Ages that we find threats in this matter. If a bishop fornicated with a four-legged animal: a penance of twelve years; if a priest, ten, and if a monk, seven; with three years on bread and water, in all cases. In addition, the bishop and priest were to be suspended. In 791, Pope Hadrian I, no doubt boasting of the strict customs of his Church, informed Charlemagne that, before being consecrated in Rome, every bishop was interrogated not only about his faith, his relations with married women or with boys, but also about whether he fornicated with beasts ("*pro quadrupedus*").

Therefore, clerics were forbidden everything: from the relative to the poor nun, from the domestic cat to the cow. This was already indicated, so to speak, in a soberly condensed form, by that prescription of the British Church which refers to bishops and priests fornicating with their mother, with a sister or with a nun "by means of some instrument".

In Eastern Europe, the popes were thoroughly discredited because of their sodomy. None other than Peter the Great - who, as Supreme Pastor and Judge of the Russian Church, led the Holy Synod - was seen more than once in "disconcerting intimacy" with his favourite bitch, Finette ^[175].

Solicitation or eros in the confessional

One of the means favoured by pastors of souls to make their celibacy somewhat more bearable has always been solicitation - that is the technical expression. In fact, confession offers ample opportunity for sacrilegious men and women, with the murmur of sins - especially *in puncto sexti mandati* - slipping into the priest's attentive and attentive ears... though often the review is unfortunately generalised, with the indifference of the laity.

It is true that some penitents offer the best - or rather the worst - of themselves in one go, laying bare the heart of the matter without the slightest reservation. But the procedure is different when it comes to shameful and candid souls, from whom only experience and prudence - with a saintly hand, if the expression is valid - can bring out what needs to be brought out: When, where, with whom, how often, in what way... And so, with the weaknesses, the drives, needs and preferences are also laid bare, so that - according to an ingenious reflection of Thomas Aquinas, advising against long dialogues between confessors and penitents - "there comes a time when, contrary to what happened at first, one and the other no longer converse like angels, nor do they talk to each other like angels...".

look upon each other as such, but observe each other as being clothed in flesh (...)".

Although the sources are not very explicit, they admit this situation, or else they think that there is nothing to discover, since the crimes are known in Heaven, on Earth and all over the world.

Bishop Pelagius, who speaks in the 14th century of the frequent adulteries caused by confession, assures us that, "in the Spanish provinces and in the Empire, the children of the laity are not much more numerous than the children of the clergy". And in 1523, Heinrich von Kettenbach, a Franciscan convert to Lutheranism, writes the following in his *New Apology and Reply of Martin Luther* against Papist Pandemonium: "The first fruit that arises from confession is the fruit of the body, for from it come those pretty little creatures which we call bastards or putative sons, which holy fathers have begotten with their penitent daughters; for some so pressed by lust that the husband is not enough for them, and the confessor must lend them his consolation with all diligence (...) and he rides women as a steer does a herd of cows."

The Church took every conceivable precaution. It ordered that confession should not be made in the dark - especially not to women - but in a place "free from suspicion", only in the church, exclusively where it was visible to everyone and never to a single woman. Confessors were also not to look women in the face and women were not allowed to be in front of the confessor, but on one of his sides. Moreover, the celibate could only visit the sick in front of two or three witnesses and was not allowed to administer the sacrament behind closed doors.

But all these reservations had more or less the same effect as the continuous threats and punishments: excommunication, banishment for fifteen years and, finally, perpetual confinement in a monastery. The temptation was even stronger. So the priests were aroused and solicited before, during and after confession, in the confessional and outside it. They were aroused by asking about the pleasure that many would not allow themselves to dream of.

Ah, may misfortune befall you," says the curse of an ungrateful Beguine of Brabant to the conscience-scrutinizer who wanted to explore her "unknown ignominies", perhaps one of those "vices", or "vices" of which she was not aware.

Latin", which, according to Caesarius of Heisterbach, had been introduced precisely through confession. And, when the time came, they also aroused themselves by reading stimulating literature. And they aroused their beloved penitents for the benefit of a third party: that is how altruistic they sometimes were! Finally, it must be said in honour of all the priests that they also aroused themselves, a custom which, it seems, still survives ^[176].

A beggar of a certain "dirty literature"?

As the medieval Church often had to discuss solicitation, a much more precise legislation of its own emerged in the modern age. In the 17th and 18th centuries we still see synods and bishops dealing with these "crimes" which are so extraordinarily stimulating for the imagination: even if from the Catholic side they do not have to deal with "the tales which certain filthy literature has circulated about alleged abuses by the confessor in the sacrament of penance".

Nevertheless, punishments were laid down even for bishops who came too close to their penitents or their spiritual daughters. And modern moral theology itself airs the solicitation "during confession", "before or immediately after confession", "on the occasion of confession", "under the pretext of confession", "in the confessional or in a place permanently intended for confession (...)" and so on. One goes so far as to ask "whether the priest (...) wants to tempt the penitent", "whether it is the penitent who starts the solicitation", "whether the penitent who is solicited is a man or a woman" (...), "whether the penitent is induced to confess (...)", "whether the penitent is induced to confess (...)" and so on.), "whether the penitent is induced to sin with the confessor, with another person or alone, whether the sin happens later or at the same moment", whether "the confessor who visits a sick woman and tells her that he wants to hear her confession is actually soliciting her" and so on ad infinitum. So: are all these overwhelming references to abuse in confession nothing more than the spawn of a certain "dirty literature"? Including moral theology?

"(...) Only that which cries out is sin".

Admittedly, they have long been very discreet in the Church. Having lost the almost absolute power they enjoyed in the Middle Ages, they want to scandalise society as little as possible. The former Jesuit Hoensbroech explains that "a perfect system of concealment, of Pharisaic justifications, has been formed; the only thing that counts, like an iron law, is: no scandal! And the Catholic Curci wrote in 1883 "about the greater prudence with which one acts and for which a more progressive culture is blamed".

Basically, the concealment of the clergy's sexual offence - forced, since the Enlightenment - was an ancient Catholic tradition, in accordance with the motto "si non caste caute".

Medieval Spanish synods, for example, deal exclusively with notorious concubines; secret concubines are not mentioned. Similarly. Alexander II in 1065 indoctrinates the patriarchs of Grado: we deal only with known and notorious cases; what happens in secret is known only to God, who is the one who has to consider it. And, in his time, the indignation of Saint Peter Damian follows the same line: "the evil would perhaps be more bearable if we tried to hide it, but no! All shame has been lost and the unchaste plague is thrown to the four winds; everything is spread by word of mouth: the place of fornication, the name of the concubine, that of the sister-in-law and the mother-in-law, and, in short, that of the whole family. And then: the messengers of love, the gifts, the giggles and jokes, the secret *rendezvous*; *"postremo, ubi omnis dubietas tollitur, uteri tumentes et pueri vagientes"*.

This typical sentence, according to which the priest's secret love affairs would be acceptable, while the real scandal would be his lovers' swollen bellies or screaming children, provoked Panizza's sarcasm at the time: "this Damian already had the true Catholic spirit; what happens in secret has not happened; only what he shouts is sin".

When, in the 12th century, some religious circles in Rome investigated the compatibility of those two papal orders of which one of the two orders was a

forbidding the hearing of masses by concubine priests and the other affirming that the sacraments were not contaminated even by such sinful priests and could therefore be received without qualms, Pope Lucius III (the man who introduced the Inquisition in Verona) issued the following rescript: "A notorious crime and a secret crime are two different crimes. A notorious crime is characterised by causing the canonical condemnation of the priest; a secret crime is one which can be endured by the Church (...) Believe, therefore, without any doubt, that, if the priest or religious is a fornicator, if the Church tolerates him, he is permitted to celebrate offices and the faithful can hear them and even receive the sacraments from him".

Along the lines of "only that which cries out is sin", the medieval penitentials increase the punishments - up to threefold - for nuns who become pregnant. The Synod of Longes (1278) went so far as formulate textually that "the dishonour that the sin of the flesh causes to the priestly order is multiplied when it leads to pregnancy". And on the threshold of the 14th century, the Synod of Constance demanded that it should be established "first of all" whether one had sinned publicly or secretly. In 1670, Clement X confirmed the constitutions of the Discalced Trinitarians of Spain which, among other things, ordered the following: "If a religious sins against the vow of chastity, he will be locked up for six months and flogged at the discretion of the prior (...) But, if his crime transcends, he will run the gauntlet in the convent and be punished for a whole year in the dungeon" ([178]).

"But let them be careful that it happens in secret".

The Franciscan Johann Eberlin of Günzburg, one of Luther's earliest followers, was not alone in denouncing the fact: "there is a saying among us that it does no harm what one does when one does it unseen". And none other than Jean Gerson, the theologian born in 1363, chancellor of the Sorbonne and doctor cristianissimus (one of Hus' fiercest opponents), was already instructing the clergy: "but let them take care that it happens in secret, never at a feast or in a sacred place, and with unmarried persons". And this is exactly the (implicit) moral maxim of , when,

for example, licentious behaviour with a penitent is only punishable by perpetual penance and deposition of the priest "if the transgression has become public knowledge".

This Church went to such extremes: on the one hand, it demanded that bishops should have witnesses to their chastity, while on the other hand, it stipulated - as at the Synod of Paris in 829 - that "a priest should not be allowed to denounce a bishop, because the latter is him".

Hypocrisy is one of the characteristic features of Christianity. Together with its criminal power, its wars and its exploitations, it forms the main part of its physiognomy; it constitutes its very essence. And since the New Testament precepts are partly too strict and partly too perverse to be observed, there is nothing left but the theology of "as if", of sanctimonious cunning, of double standards. Origen, the most important theologian before Constantine, already acknowledges that "many teach chastity without having observed it. They teach one thing in public and act otherwise in secret and in secret; they do all things with men in mind and for the sake of vainglory".

This tendency has often been encouraged, directly or indirectly. The Church induced (and induces) again and again the pretence because, in practice, unmarried clerics were (and are) much more necessary to it than chaste clerics and because it preferred (and prefers) a priest involved serious sexual "crimes" who knew (and knows) how to hide his relationships to one who did not deceive anyone, who "sinned openly". And, of course, he is so fond of the devious, the meapilas! He so hates clerics who - as happened at the synod of Brandenburg in 1435 - acknowledge their deeds! "For if, through weakness of the flesh, their cooks or their maids become pregnant by them or perhaps by others, they do not deny the sin, but rather take great pride in being the parents of children born of such a reprehensible council".

They do not deny it (to the people): that is the scandal for the Church! Because such a thing tarnishes its aura and, consequently, its power. On the other hand, the sexual life of the religious, when it is kept within the sphere of the Church, is a scandal for the Church.

hidden from the view of the laity, he is not the least bit ashamed of it, deep down, he doesn't care at all.

This is confirmed by the whole history of celibacy. Again it is the The "most Christian" Dr. Gerson who instructs us: "The vow of chastity refers only to the faults of marriage by which one binds oneself to chastity. Therefore, he who does not marry does not break the vow, even if he sins very seriously" ^[179].

No "vegetables" or "I'm sure God understands".

And it was not only a doctrine; above all, it is a practice that has been followed to this day. Most of the clergy surely thought and think the same as that unbelieving abbot, the mitred monsignore Galiani: "it is a grave defect not to enjoy such a short life and not to come back for a second time".

And when a certain priest - who later became a parish priest of the Old Catholics - expressed his intention to leave the Roman Catholic Church to some colleagues, the one who was "more senior" advised him to stay, saying: "Look, if you want a woman, you don't have to throw it all away. The Church needs people like you and me, not sterile ones. No vegetables. if things get too tight, you go off with a woman; then you can repent and go to confession and do it honestly (...) I'm sure God understands". This advice was accompanied by a reference to a colleague who took a girl on holiday every year and said: "Now I can take another year".

"More than once," says ex-Catholic Mynarek, "I have heard the cynical statement from theology professors that celibacy consists only in not getting married; what one does otherwise is, of course, sin, but confession was invented precisely to cancel it.

The last thing these clerics present at the well-trodden gates of hell are "arguments against marriage" ^[180].

In any , it was not virginity that was promoted celibacy, but an enormous belittling of women.

FIFTH BOOK

THE LAITY

The "believer" does not belong to himself, he can only be an instrument; he has to be used; he needs someone to use him.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

CHAPTER 18

DEFAMATION OF WOMEN

No religion or worldview has appreciated and honoured women as much as Christianity.

HAERING, Catholic theologian^[181]

For as the Church is subject to Christ, so also wives should be subject to their husbands in everything.

Eph., 5, 24

Teach him to stay within the bounds of obedience.

1 Clem 1, 3

Your longings will be directed towards your husband, and he will be your master (...) Lower yourself into submission (...) Be one of the subordinates.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM^[182]

If people could see what is hidden under the skin (...), looking at a woman would only make us vomit (...) If we cannot even touch mucus and phlegm with the tip of our finger: why do we so zealously long to embrace the very container of filth?

SAINT ODON (878-942), abbot of
Cluny and organiser of the Cluniac
reform^[183]

*Woman relates to man as the imperfect and defective
(imperfectum, deficiens) to the perfect (perfectum).*

THOMAS AQUINAS^[184]

If you see a woman, think of her as the Devil, a kind of hell.

ENEAS SILVIO (PIUS II, 1458-1464)^[185]

*All wickedness is small compared to the wickedness of a woman.
The wickedness of man is better than a good woman.*

Synod of Turnau, 1611 (presided over by Cardinal

FORGATS and in the presence of the papal nuncio).

*That a beautiful and well-groomed woman is a temple built on a
cesspit (super cloacam) (...) Who will want to worship the phylum
as a god?*

ABRAHAM DE SANCTA CLARA (1644-1709)^[186]

*Christian women owe the Catholic Church their true dignity. It is
therefore right and proper that women should also be grateful to
the Church.*

RIES, theologian^[187]

1. THE INSULTS OF THEOLOGAINS

At first, esteemed as a priestess

Matriarchal cultures knew little misogyny. On the contrary, women were seen as the bearers of vital energy and fertility; and their greater sensitivity and capacity for suggestion made them more suitable for worship than men. So it became

A healer and sorceress, she was mainly associated with music and oracles and sometimes even ascended to the highest religious dignities.

In ancient China, female shamans played an important role. Female priesthood was quite widespread in Japanese Shinto and, temporarily, also in the Vedic religion. The Egyptians called the priestesses in charge of sacrifices "singers of the god" and the Sumerians "ladies of the god" or "women of the god". Druids were highly respected by the Celts, as were the seers among the Germans, the veleda of the Bruttians and the gamma of the Semnones, whose fame reached as far as Rome. In Greece there were a multitude of priestesses (*supra*), since all the magick was directed by them: the Pythia, Cassandra, the Sibyl...

Hatred of women probably appeared with the collapse of matriarchal societies, perhaps because of men's bad conscience, their inferiority complexes, their fear of revenge on women, their fears of their generative functions. It should be noted that in almost all Indo-Germanic languages, the words "man" and "human" come from the same root, but not the word "woman".

Later, condemned by the priests

From very early on, women attracted the enmity, above all, of priests, which is related to those parapsychological or magical-numinative energies called "mana" in Melanesian, "orenda" in the language of the Iroquois and Huron Indians, "wakanda" in that of the Sioux, "manitu" in that of the Algonquians or "hasina" in that of the Malagasy, which correspond to the Old Norse words "hamingja" (luck), "megin" (strength) and "mattr" (power) and to the Germanic expression "heill" and which, being more characteristic of women than of men, often made them healers and healers, knowledgeable and wise, bearers of the

The "sacred" or "divine", thus a precursor and competitor of the healer, the shaman or the priest, who, for that very reason, discredited it,

treating her as a sorceress, condemning her as a witch or negotiating her eradication.

Often it was precisely the great religions that made the sexual function of women suspect and robbed them of their function as servants of divinity: In Persian Mazdeism, in Brahmanism, in the Hebrew religion, in Islam and, of course, in Christianity, which perfected anti-feminism to the most perfidious of extremes, intensifying it to an almost unbearable degree, more than any other misogynist religion, something which Protestant theologians admit but which Catholics have denied and continue to deny today.

The three divinities of Christianity happen to be masculine and their theological symbolism is dominated by the idea of the masculine. The Holy Spirit was the only person to whom some sects attributed a feminine nature. For the Church, woman was a creature imprisoned by the Earth, the telluric being par excellence, devouring and vampirising, in whom, in a particularly malevolent form, earthly seduction and the temptations of sin took shape. Hell was also thought to be located in the interior of the Earth: hot, muddy and sinister. Radically opposed to it was Heaven: up there, above the clouds, hygienic and aseptic, completely asexual, eternal, enchantingly chaste and resounding with hallelujahs, that garden of paradise shaded by the eyebrows of God the Father, carpeted with alpine grass and vine leaves and which, as all the Fathers of the Church repeat, was taken away from man by the wicked Eve. For this, the beloved Father in Heaven threatened her:

"One of the few biblical prophecies that have been fulfilled.

, the anti-feminism of many theologians is the result of a covert form of fear of women, of a series of complexes about all kinds of taboo ideas, of a defensive attitude towards a supposed danger; it is an echo of what Friedrich Heer once called a "anti-feminism".

The "ideology of bachelors" or, in the words of Patriarch Maximus in the hall of the Second Vatican Council, a "psychosis of celibates".

The first disparagement of women in Christianity comes from St. Paul (supra), who could never refer to Jesus to back it up.

Then it was Paul who was invoked, developing his misogyny by means of falsifications. Consequently, the disciples of Jesus were also later turned into propagandists for virginity and hatred of women. Of Peter, the first pope and father of a family, it was claimed that he fled wherever there were women, and he was even made to declare that "women do not deserve to live" ([188]).

The belittlement of women by monks and early Church Fathers

Women were especially maligned, avoided... and feared by the monks, who dissolved in their presence like salt in water, to use an old simile. (According to a truly diabolical typo that slipped into a press release of the German Catholic Congress in 1968 by turning "manche" some? into "Monche" monks?: "just at the sight of a woman, the monks start grunting like real pigs").

Some monks did not see a woman for forty years or more. Others - apparently influenced by repressed incestuous desires - rejected their closest relatives, sometimes consoling themselves that they would see them again very soon in Paradise. An Egyptian monk who has to transport his old mother to the other side of a river wraps his hands in rags. Simeon the Stylite, for ascetic reasons, did not look at his mother for the rest of his life. And Theodore, first a favourite pupil and then a follower of Pachomius, declared that, if God commanded it, he would kill even his own mother. Whoever can despise the pain of his own mother will easily bear everything else that is imposed on him, it is said in the Life of St. Fulgentius. And, in the 20th century, a certain prior still indoctrinates a father who is expecting his mother's visit, telling him that he must also be reserved with her because "all women are dangerous"!

In the Catholic Church, in particular, woman appears from the outset as an obstacle to perfection, as a carnal and inferior subject who seduces man, like Eve, the sinner par excellence.

They do so by invoking the Bible, the old story of Creation and Original Sin in which the woman is formed from the man, whom she seduces.

Tertullian, one of the Fathers of the Church, whom some Catholics praise as the "herald of a new feminine ideal" and of "a higher facet of the marital union", demeans women to the point of presenting them as the "gateway to the Devil" and blames them for the death of Jesus.

Accusing the woman in general, he says: "You are the one who has facilitated the entrance of the Devil, you have broken the seal of the tree, you have been the first to turn your back on the law of God and you have also dragged down the one whom the Devil had not been able to approach. You have simply thrown the faithful picture of God to the ground. Because of you, that is, because of death, the Son of God had to die, and you still think of putting ornaments on your skirt of skins? According to Tertullian, women can only wear mourning clothes and must cover "their very dangerous face" as soon as they cease to be children, at the risk of renouncing eternal life.

St. Augustine, *lumen ecclesiae*, declares woman to be an inferior being who was not made by God in His image and likeness ("mulier non est facta ad imaginem Dei"): a very serious defamation, which is repeated until the middle centuries of the Middle Ages, in the juridical compilations of Ivo of Chartres and Gratian and in a series of important theologians. All of them certify that only man is made in the image of God; to ascribe this quality to woman is an "absurdity". According to Augustine, it corresponds to both "Justice" and "the Natural Order of Humanity that women serve men". "The just order occurs only when man commands and woman obeys".

St. John Chrysostom considers that the women are done "essentially" to satisfy the lust of men. And St. Jerome

-Doctor of the Church like the former and who, it seems, "did so much for women"- decrees: "If the woman does not submit to the man who is her head, she becomes guilty of the same sin as a man who does not submit to her who is his head (Christ)". This idea was introduced into canon law by Gratian.

The anecdote of the synod of Macon (585) is sadly famous, when, in the midst of the debate on the question of whether, at the time of the resurrection of the flesh, women who had made sufficient merit should become men before they could enter Paradise, a bishop declared that women were not human beings ("*mulierem hominem vocitari non posse*") ([189]).

"Tota mulier sexus

In the Middle Ages, when men and women prayed at night: "I was begotten in sin, and in sin my mother conceived me", woman was slandered by the Church, which branded her as evil and diabolical, and as the source of all evils. The devout man had to flee from her and could not visit houses inhabited by women, nor eat with them, nor speak to them. Women were "snakes and scorpions", "receptacles of sin", "the accursed sex" whose "infamous task" was to mankind. "From the Middle Ages onwards, having a body meant a kind of dishonour for women," writes Simone de Beauvoir. And Eduard von Hartmann sums up: "Throughout the Christian Middle Ages women appear as the quintessence of all vices, of all evils and sins, as the curse and corruption of man, as a diabolical ambush on the path of virtue and holiness".

Theological anti-feminism thus affected all social strata. In accordance with the typology of St. Ambrose (Adam equals soul, Eve equals body) and the old Western motto "*tota mulier sexus*", women were regarded as sexually insatiable, and the Judeo-Christian doctrine of female inferiority, which was further developed on a theoretical level by scholasticism, was defended with the utmost determination.

According to Honorius of Autun, no woman is pleasing to God. According to St. Francis of Assisi, he who has dealings with women is "as liable to have his spirit soiled as he who walks through fire is to have the soles of his sandals scorched". And according to St Albert the Great, only perfect human beings, i.e. men, should be born. More clearly: "woman has

The "work of Nature is not completely frustrated", but even this is attributed to man, since it can be the result of a "*corruptio instrumenti*", of a defective formation of his penis (190).

Thomas Aquinas: "(...) a defective little man".

And what is the verdict on the matter of the highest Catholic authority? Thomas Aquinas (died 1274), prince of scholasticism, *doctor communis*, *doctor angelicus*, elevated by Leo XIII in 1879-80 to the rank of first doctor of the Church and patron of all Catholic faculties and schools, believes that the essential value of woman lies in her reproductive capacity and in her usefulness in domestic tasks. Once again, we find her, if the expression is valid, delimited by the circle traced in Ex. 20, 17: woman, servant, ox, donkey...!

According to St Thomas, woman must be subordinate to man, since he is her head ("*vir est capus mulieris*") and more perfect than she is in body and spirit; he was already so before original sin. The subordination of women derives from divine law and natural law, in other words, from the very nature of women, which is why Thomas demands obedience from them in both public and private life. "Woman relates to man as the imperfect and defective (*imperfectum, deficiens*) to the perfect (*perfectum*)". Woman is spiritually and bodily inferior, and her intellectual inferiority is the result of her bodily inferiority, more precisely of her "excess of moisture" and her "lack of temperature". Woman is a real mistake of nature, a sort of "defective little man" "mistaken" "mutilated" ("*femina est mas occasionatus*"): an expletive that goes back to Aristotle, often repeated by St. Thomas and later taken up by his disciples.

For St Thomas, as for his teacher Albert, a man should only beget men, "because man is the perfect fulfilment of the human species". If, in spite of everything, women are born - God help us - this is due, according to the patron saint of Catholic universities, *lux theologorum*,

either to a defect in the sperm (St. Albert's "*corruptio instrumenti*"), or to the blood of the uterus, or to the "humid winds from the south" (*venti australis*) which, due to the precipitation they cause, are the cause of children with a high water content, i.e., girls.

Woman, according to St. Thomas, is only necessary for reproduction. Apart from that, she traps the soul of man and brings it down from the sublime eminence on which it stands, subjecting his body to "a slavery which is more bitter than any other".

The Journal of Catholic Theology itself praises *a posteriori* that Aquinas values man in his entirety, on the one hand, and on the other certifies a threefold undervaluation of woman: "undervaluation in development (biogenetic), in being (qualitative) and in practice (functional)" ([191]).

Preachers and bonfires

The devastating misogyny of theologians led, from countless sermons in parishes, cathedrals and noble chapels, to an extensive misogynist literature. In it, woman appears as the death of body and soul, as a harpy or a diabolical snare, a lure or an inoculated poison; in a word, as a harlot. In a poem by the French bishop Marbodius of Rennes (1035-1123), the prelate subsumes under the concept of "harlot" the entire female sex.

The history of culture owes to an Italian Dominican the wretched feminine alphabet: *avidissimum animal*, *bestiale baratrum*, *concupiscentia camis*, *duellum damnosum*, and so on; in it, woman is represented as the Plague, the wreck of life, the Beast and similar similes.

Eventually, this continued demonisation of women led to her being burned at the stake as a witch. In 1484, Innocent VIII, the great progressive, had spoken in his bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus* de "very many persons of both sexes" (*quamplures utriusque sexus personae*) who "have carnal intercourse with gallant nocturnal spirits". But what we can consider as the commentary on the bull, the *Hammer of*

The Witches of the two papal legates, the Dominicans Kramer and Sprenger, which appeared in 1489 and ran to thirty editions, was directed almost exclusively against women. "For the connoisseurs", as the latter declare "It is quite clear that "more women than men are infected with the heresy of the witches" of the Holy Father. Hence, logically, one cannot speak of the heresy of witches, but of witches, if we want to give the name to *potiori*; and praise be to the Most High who has preserved the male sex from such an abomination until today". Both witch-hunters only threaten men in passing and, above all, the husbands, sons and lawyers who support the accused.

The pathological hatred of women contained in this book - which unhesitatingly invokes the Fathers of the Church, from St. Augustine to St. Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas - leads its authors to assert, among other things, that women not only have a weaker and more carnal understanding than men, but also that their faith is less solid. As proof: the etymology of the word "femina" (woman) is composed of "faith" and "faith". "minus" then femina = who has less faith. Indeed, woman is "only an imperfect animal".

For centuries it was mainly women who suffered accusations and torture and were sent to the stake, even in Protestant countries, for Luther agreed with the popes about burning "the Devil's harlots" ([192]).

Disparate insults in the baroque period

In the 17th century - at the time when Johannes Berchmanns S.J. (supra) teaches that "one must flee from the gaze of women as from the gaze of basilisks" - Christian sermons are full of slander against women. The Bavarian chamberlain Egidius Albertinus calls her

"The Augustinian hermit Ignatius Erti asks: "Who has a stupider head and a weaker heart than a woman?" and the Munich-born Georg Stengel, the prince's tutor and one of the most important Jesuits of his , denies women both the right and the duty to live in the world.

He writes that "woman has an advantage over all other beings in lying and deceit", following a Father and Doctor of the Church, St. John Chrysostom, and that she is "a serpent against whose poison there is no antidote", "a torture and martyrdom", or repeating insults, "a serpent against whose poison there is no antidote", "a torture and martyrdom", in branding woman as "evil upon evil", "a serpent against whose poison there is no antidote", "a torture and martyrdom" or repeating the insults of St. Ambrose, who thought that woman is "the door through which the Devil comes to us". It is the diabolical impudence, the slime, the venom, the bile of the celibate, the resentment of those who deny to others what is denied to them.

At the dawn of the 18th century, Abraham of St. Clare, a preacher of resounding oratory, drew on world literature from Solomon to Petrarch when cursing women. And at the beginning of the 19th century, writings were still appearing referring to the infamous scholastic dispute "Habeat mulier animam?"

At present, there is also no "equalisation" of any kind.

In 1919, Benedict XV - of whom there was a rumour (and not spread by evildoers, but by cardinals) that he had poisoned a competitor - spoke out in favour of women's suffrage, but only because he believed, with good reason, that women were conservative and clerical. Otherwise, the clergy continued to oppose their emancipation, to demand submission and the necessary "inequality and hierarchy": "The Holy Scriptures take special care to warn us of two of the worst occasions of sin: 'wine and women'".

And even today, when the role of women seems to have changed more than in the past five thousand years (which Paul VI himself considers to be the case), the role of women is still more important than it has been in the past five thousand years.

"remarkable"), the Church of *aggiornamento* and opportunistic pseudo-adaptation lets the old anti-feminism show through and insists on defending it as a principle. Thus, it continues to teach that the "fundamental" duty of

the wife is to "take care of the house, submitting to the man", without admitting any kind of equality of rights.

Women are not more competent in any particular sphere; men have "the last word in all economic and domestic matters"; they must be "ready to obey in everything that is lawful". "Her place is first and foremost in the home". It is expressly stated that "the aspirations of those feminists (mostly of socialist inspiration) whose claims are aimed at an increasing balance between men and women must be rejected". To this end, it refers, in italics, to the old tradition of Ephesians 5, 23: "man is the head of the family". And the *Osservatore Romano* still announced in 1965 - without our knowledge of a reply - that the "primacy of man" was willed by God.

At the same time, however, Catholics (with the shamelessness that has always characterised them) celebrate the Church as the liberator of women and consider themselves above "all the pettiness and vulgarities that ancient and modern paganism has said about the nature and position of women".

while, on the one hand, they complain about the sad, oppressive and unworthy fate of women among non-Christian peoples (both pre-Christian and post-Christian), while they write that "women find themselves in them in a situation of contempt and opprobrium which could not be more profound", while they claim "that historians of women, from Marx and Bebel to Johannes Scherr, are, for the most part, dilettantes, they claim, on the other hand, that a new epoch for the "feminine soul" has arisen since the Holy Spirit acted in Mary's womb ("the power of the Most High made its masterpiece in the workshop of Mary's virginal womb") and lie when they write that "the Church, with all its power, has tried to improve the oppressive fate of woman", has

"freed from the chains of slavery", has given him "a whole new dignity" and has made his "esteem" grow.

The "positive valuing of virginity" has brought about a "gendering of women" when, in fact, virginity campaigns have always been the "mainstay" of the campaign, and the "positive valuing of virginity" has brought about a "gendering of women" when, in fact, virginity campaigns have always been the "mainstay" of the campaign.

negative correlate of the defamation of women. Moreover, anyone who calls clerical anti-feminism by name is accused of historical ignorance and the "heretics" are imputed with the subjugating praxis that the Church has maintained for all these centuries ⁽¹⁹³⁾.

Positive and negative assessments of women among heretics

However, ancient Gnosis and Manichaeism already reserved a prominent position for women. Montanists could be priests and bishops. In Catharism, the perfect woman could break bread, hear confessions and forgive sins. Among the Bulgarian Bogomilites and the Waldenses, women had access to the narrowest circle of the Perfect Ones. In these cases, the rejection of carnal marriage did not mean any contempt for the woman, who was almost on the same level as the man. Similarly, in the more libertine Italian heretical circles, in addition to the disappearance of the hierarchical differences between mistress and servant, women had an equal position with men.

Protestantism, on the other hand, maintained Catholic discrimination against women.

Like any Church Father, Luther interpreted the story of Original Sin for the benefit of man, to whom "command" belongs, while woman must "humble herself". Man is "greater and better", he is the "custodian of the child"; woman is a "half-child", a "wild animal"; "the greatest honour due to her is that we are all born because of her".

In 1591, a number of Lutheran theologians in Wittenberg whether women were human beings. In 1672, the writing "Foemina non est homo" appeared in the same city. This was the same decade in which Wittenberg disputed whether a camel could pass through the eye of a needle and in which a treatise on natural science on witches' potions appeared ^[194].

2. THE GLORIFICATION OF MARY: AN EXPRESSION OF DEMONISATION OF WOMEN

From the 12th to the 20th century, the Marian movement is closely connected with the condemnation of women, of sinful flesh, of the world of evil women.

FRIEDRICH HEER

The biblical Mary and the fetish of the Church

"There has been no religion that has valued and honoured women as much as Christianity," says an eminent advocate of Christianity. "In the Catholic Church, this finds a particularly intense expression in Mariology and in the effective veneration of Mary, whom the Son of God himself must have honoured as a mother. God could not have given greater honour to woman and mother". But in reality, there is no figure in this religion in which absurdity converges as in that of Our Lady, the Virgin who finally ascended to Heaven in body and soul: a product of archaic mythology much retouched by means of devout legends and great lies. The late fetish has nothing to do with the original image of the Bible, and even less with the most ancient strata of tradition.

The edifying clerical art would have us forget that Mary played hardly any part in the New Testament; that the Book of Books spoke of her very rarely and without showing any special veneration; that St. Paul, the first Christian author, mentions her only a few times, as does the oldest Gospel; that the Gospel of John, the Letter to the Hebrews and the Acts of the Apostles also ignore her; that the writings that mention her are full of contradictions; that Jesus himself is completely silent about her conception by the Holy Spirit and about the maternity of the Virgin and, what is more, never calls Mary mother or speaks of maternal love, and even rebukes her harshly when she takes him as her mother, and that he does not even speak of her motherly love.

that before the third century no Father of the Church takes into consideration the permanent virginity of Mary, and until the sixth century no one knows anything of her ascension to heaven body and soul; that the faith in her Immaculate Conception, afterwards converted into dogma, was combated as superstitious by the greatest luminaries of the Church: Bernard, Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, all of whom invoked St. Augustine; and that the same thing happened, to a much greater degree, with so many other Marian traits^[195].

The only important thing is that, through all these crude omissions and even cruder inventions, one finally had a creature asexual to the extreme, which could be presented to the world as an ideal and in which took shape, not the essential idea, but the caricature of every woman.

The whiteness of women or the "defeminisation" of our lady

With astonishing consistency, the slightest symptoms of *auro seminalis* were also eradicated. Even before her birth, just as her father's semen was penetrating her mother Anne, Mary was free from hereditary sin, from the most terrible of sins from which all human beings suffer, whiter than white, so to speak: in any case, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was not proposed to the world until almost nineteen centuries later, on December 1, 1854.

Nothing could be more logical than that a creature who was begotten in such a marvellous way should lead a life no less marvellous. And indeed, when Mary conceived and bore a son she remained a virgin, no pleasure defiled her; neither penis nor vulgar sperm defiled her; God conducted the whole affair with the utmost discretion and did not injure the mother's vagina. The carpenter's son of the Bible is certainly not the carpenter's son, and his brothers and sisters, to whom the Bible bears witness, are certainly not his brothers and sisters. On the contrary, everything is marvellous... as it had happened before, in fact, with dozen children of gods who were also born of virgin mothers.

So only Mary, pure, undefiled, virgin *ante partum, in partu* and *post partum*, became in the end the glorious antagonist - in everything - of Eve, the sinner, the guilty one, the companion of the serpent - that is, of the phallus - the woman. And the more the Virgin was extolled, the more all women (natural and living) were degraded. On the one hand, an incomparable hyperdulia; on the other, an almost infinite defamation. The two things maintained an unshakeable reciprocity.

Mary versus Eve

According to an ancient tradition, the Gallic and Germanic clerics of the 7th century drastically opposed Eve, the primordial image of woman, to Mary, "the virgin who had given birth to God". In the middle of the mass, a bishop said: "Her life did not originate in concupiscence; the power of nature did not decompose her corpse (...) The merits of this tender maiden are exalted in all their value (!) if we compare them with the 10th deeds of the first Eve: for if Mary has brought life into the world, the other has begotten the law of death; and if the one has corrupted us by her sin, the other has liberated us by her maternity. The one did not harm in the very root by means of the apple of the tree (...) She bore *coya* pains the curse (...) Her unfaithfulness yielded to the serpent, deceived man and corrupted the son; Mary's obedience made reparation to the Father, made her worthy of the Son and redeemed the generations that followed. The former found bitterness in the juice of the apple; the latter obtained from the forehead of the Son a few drops of sweetness". Et cetera.

The debasement became a constant. In the Middle Ages, at the same time as the exalting cult of Our Lady flourished and hymns, dedications, hermitages and Marian brotherhoods multiplied, women were reviled, humiliated and oppressed (*supra*). In this way, Mary (in spite of everything, as a product of a patriarchal ideology

The "handmaid of the Lord" and "handmaid of God" (i.e. of the priest) could become the "gateway to Heaven" while any other "handmaid of God" (i.e. of the priest) could become the "gateway to Heaven" while any other

woman - especially if she was not a nun, a direct instrument of the clergy - was "a permanently open door to Hell".

It is quite logical that the postponement of the figure of Mary among certain heretical sects did not entail any kind of postponement of women, but was, on the contrary, connected with the ecclesiastical equality of both sexes. Female dignity was not lowered even in the Adamite cults. The free sexual relations that, in some cases, *perfecti* and *perfectae*, sons and daughters of God, maintained between the Cathars and the Waldensians, did not involve any kind of discrimination against the female couple, which, moreover, is perfectly understandable. On the other hand, the later tendency of these circles towards the Catholic interpretation of Mary had as a significant consequence a further lowering of the status of women ^[196].

3. DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

"The black man has done his job".

In early Christianity, women, whom Jesus had put on the same level as men, were able to become missionaries and to impart doctrine. Christian prophetesses may have appeared before the prophets. There were women who founded or led communities. In the time of the apostles, the dignities of "widow of the congregation" and "deaconess" were known, which were partly equivalent to that of a priest. In a word, women had prophetic, catechetical, charitable and liturgical functions, were soon in the majority in the new religion, often became its "leaders" and formed the least problematic group of converts. Celsus calls Christianity "the religion of women" and Porphyry goes so far as to claim that the Church is dominated by women. And it was precisely women who convinced the educated men and eventually also the emperors.

In more recent periods, however, there has been a tendency to relegate women more and more, disqualifying them from assuming ecclesiastical offices and receiving dignities, a struggle closely related to that waged by the clergy against the laity. And after they had definitively excluded her from the hierarchy, they continued to question her.

Menstruating and pregnant women are impure

Thus, in the Middle Ages, women could not wear their heads uncovered, nor sit among religious at banquets, nor enter the choir, nor approach the altar, nor take the Eucharist in their hands, sometimes on the express grounds of feminine weakness and impurity, "the defilement of the divine sacraments by a woman's hand". And while men could baptise in case of need, women were forbidden to do so.

In medieval penitentials, the woman is always below the man.

At the beginning of the 10th century, the *Instructions of parish visitation* by Regino de Priim - one of the most significant collections of canon law sources prior to the Decree of Gratian - forbade all women to sing in churches. So for centuries some boys were castrated for the sole purpose of replacing female voices in cathedral choirs.

Another very significant example of the fight against women as sexual beings is the fact that, within the churches, menstruating and pregnant women were considered impure. The specifically feminine functions (menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth) which in the past qualified women for religious service were precisely those which disqualified them in Christianity. Thus, St. Jerome preached that "there is nothing more impure than a woman with her period; everything she touches becomes impure". Hence, in the early Church, menstruating women who kissed the hand of a priest were punished. Until the early modern period, they were also denied entrance to the house of the Lord and communion. Those who violated this precept were punished with a penalty.

of seven years. And in many places, the priests who gave them the Eucharist were removed from their jobs.

In the West, even menstruating nuns could not enter church or take communion. Some theologians in the early 15th century defended this custom - successfully - and in the 16th and 17th centuries it led to public humiliations. An ecclesiastical protocol from the Black Forest region reports in 1684: "menstruating women relatives stand before the door of the church and do not get to enter, remaining, so to speak, in the pillory" ^[197].

Childbirth also makes a mess

In addition to menstruating and pregnant women, the Church also considered parturients and sometimes even those who assisted in childbirth to be impure. The midwife, whose position in "pagan" antiquity was very high, was one of the most unworthy and despised offices in most of the Christian West.

An important church ordinance of the 3rd century forbade participation in the Incidentally - and this is a new expression of the clerical contempt for women - the "in the mysteries" to all those who had attended a birth -The prohibition was extended to twenty days if the newborn was a boy, and to forty days if it was a girl. The period of purification for the mother lasted twenty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of daughter. At the end of the 5th century some priests refused to baptise dying women in childbirth unless the purification period had elapsed. And in the 11th century, any woman who set foot in a church during this time was still punished.

It was in the middle of the 12th century that the clergy allowed access to the church, at least theoretically, to women who had just given birth. In practice, however, these women did not leave the house until thirty or forty days after giving birth, but not before having themselves "blessed" in order to obtain forgiveness for the pleasure they had enjoyed ("my mother conceived me in sin!")... and not without first paying the "deliveries", some oboli

The penalties often disputed by parish priests and friars, which tended to be higher in extra-marital births and which in some places were graded according to the sin committed.

In the 20th century, however Archbishop Gröber ("with the recommendation of the entire German episcopate") gave the event - since it is still "blessed" today - another meaning: "the blessing of the Christian mother after childbirth is a thanksgiving and not a ceremony of purification or a request for forgiveness".

The Second Vatican Council and women

If it is true that the Second Vatican Council did not completely ignore the situation women in the Church and society, it is also true that it dealt with the subject with remarkable conciseness; and in the form of those poor pseudolamentations of the so-called social encyclicals, with which, from time to time, the popes exhort the rich to have compassion for the poor.

Why should it matter if the Council pronounces itself, in insipid words, in favour of the "right to free choice of spouse and way of life", or for the "participation of women in cultural life"? And the hesitations are much greater. And the formulations, almost insurmountable in their lukewarmness, are all the more compromising because the current external form of the Catholic Church continues to prove the stentorian marginalisation of women.

The holy assembly itself was little more than a purely male council. Two thousand five hundred ecclesiastical dignitaries met with, at most, fifty women, "lay listeners" (*infra*), mostly nuns who, moreover, never intervened, but rather demonstrated the Pauline "*mulier taceat in ecclesia*"; these women had to confine themselves to listening and only at the end, from the third session onwards, were they allowed to sit on benches without backs. (And one can still be moved by such magnanimity or luck!) Incidentally, the *Codex Juris Canonici*, the current code of the Catholic Church, is also full of direct and indirect sexual discrimination.

And yet there are at least as many Catholics as Catholics; and about 370.000 friars and laymen as opposed to 1.250.000 nuns [\(\[198\]\)](#).

CHAPTER 19

OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

Christian ideology has contributed in no small measure to the oppression of women.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR^[199]

The premise that woman is the bearer of sin, which is for Christianity an immovable article of faith, must inevitably have had a very negative influence on her social and legal position.

J. MARCUSE^[200]

The cruelty of the civil laws against women has been united in all social usages with the cruelty of Nature. Thus they have been treated as beings who were not masters of their own understanding.

DENIS DIDEROT^[201]

Throughout history, most women have lived almost at the level of animals...

KATE MILLETT^[202]

1. THE BEST PLACED

Women's history was made by men - , against them.
- since the early days of patriarchy.

The situation between the Romans and the Germans

However, from the perspective of the imperial era, the days when a Roman could treat his wife as if she were a piece of meat, sell her or kill her were far behind him. On the contrary, the law of the Empire favoured female emancipation and allowed women remarkable personal and social self-sufficiency. Two hundred years before Saint Augustine, the mother had the same rights as the father, the daughter had the same right to inherit as the son, and separation was available to both spouses, for which a simple formal request was sufficient. Virginity and marital fidelity also had no relevant significance. Propertius, Horace and Ovid (whose *Ars Amandi* was the only poem of antiquity included in the index) extolled free love.

Among the Germans, the man was certainly the ruler. He could beat and sell his wife and, if she committed adultery, he could kill her with impunity. But this domination was at the same time a protectorate, for the Germanic woman was never the infamous "vessel of sin" but, as Tacitus says, "sanctum aliquid et providum", a being who demanded not only care but also respect.

This great respect for Germanic women is reflected in the criminal law, which in most countries recognises higher compensation for women than for men. (The respective amounts that had to be paid as compensation for injury or death in a crime between clans indicate, until the Middle Ages, the social and legal hierarchy of a person).) In the law of the Alaman people and in Bavarian law the blood ransom for women was double that of men; among the Franks, if the victim was of childbearing age, the amount was trebled; but in the Christian Middle Ages it was reduced to half of the male indemnity! "The clergy,

inclined, according to a strange idea, to regard woman as an impure and inferior being, which probably had to do above all with Eve's original sin, he could not accept the positive evaluation of the Germans and, in the course of time, succeeded in making woman lose her legal esteem".

On the contrary, the Germanic respect for women was a consequence of their religion. This is why it must not have been so easy to convert the Germanic women. For although the "personalist factor" of Christianity was not new to them, ideas such as the secondary creation of woman, her role as the Devil's partner in original sin and her defamation by the Church Fathers as *fons et caput mali* were strange and difficult to understand, ideas which served as the basis for the subordination of women in all spheres of life. The doctrine of virginity as the most sublime form of existence must also have seemed new and strange to them, and the same can be said of the impossibility of access to religious dignities or priestly marriage, or of canon law, which pretermitted the interests of wife and daughter in inheritances. A Catholic writer admits, in our own day, that "the esteem in which women were held among the pagan peoples north of the Alps contrasted sharply with the contempt which the Fathers of the Church expressed without the slightest hesitation" [203].

No right of inheritance or estate

Given the power and enormous influence of Christian priests, their constant denigration of women could not fail to have legal, economic, social and educational consequences.

Let us bear in mind that, in the Middle Ages, secular princes often counted for little against spiritual ones and especially against the Representative of God on Earth; that canon law, as the law of the largest community in the West and as its most important legal system, went far beyond the purely internal sphere of the Church; that Christian principles also determined the

politics, education and science. It is thus immediately clear that the inveterate misogyny of the Catholic Church must have fatally reinforced traditional patriarchy.

It was not only in Italy that women fell below the level achieved in the Empire, seeing their inheritance rights reduced in the Middle Ages and losing - as a person lacking legal capacity - the *Muntwait* ("monovaldo": a relationship of protection and representation, from the Old German "munt" Latinised "mundium"). In Germany, things were also much worse for her than for the Roman woman of old as far as her pecuniary rights were concerned. Strict legislation prevented her from having an estate worthy of the name, and she was left with virtually no choice but marriage or the convent. And if she married, all her movable and immovable property belonged to her husband. He administered them, held the legal title and was the sole usufructuary.

If the woman was repudiated (even if she was innocent) she generally had to renounce any claim to restitution of the dowry. "If it has been forfeited (...)" the Swabian code says, "she shall have to dispense with ". If, on the other hand, she herself disposed of part of the dowry, her husband could annul the deal. Nor could she make testamentary dispositions without permission, with the sole exception, in some local codes, of "her old clothes and the jewels of her trousseau".

"She will live according to will".

The tributes of the troubadours did not influence the legal and economic situation of women either, not even in the time of courtly love. She received the illusion, but the man still possessed the right. He is her warden and her superior and, as an ancient source decrees, "she shall live according to his will and be submissive and obedient, for by herself, without her husband, she can do nothing and command nothing". Other codes guarantee male supremacy with similar expressions, and in Friesland things went so far as to declare a man of age to be of age.

seven-year-old orphan in order to make him his own mother's guardian. A female saying from the late Middle Ages says: "the proper thing for a woman is a God-fearing, chaste and retiring life". And in 1883, an edifying Book for Educated Catholics approved by the Bishop of Tübingen still charged Catholic women that "Religiousness increases the charms more than anything else (...) Let her not regret what her husband has in store for her (...)".

Sentiment was rarely the deciding factor in marriages. Marriage was a matter of family and property, not sentiment, and the woman herself was something of a man's object. She had to love the one she married, and only exceptionally could she marry the one she loved. It was the closest male relative who granted her hand. And as a wife she was almost a slave and could even be given away or sold, for pleasure or out of necessity; this custom continued in Germany well into the 19th century, and elsewhere much later.

The double standard stopped at nothing. The husband could go to the brothel, he could do and order whatever he wanted, while the wife could only love when the husband wanted, whether he liked it or not. She had to be faithful to him in return. Hence it was usually women who had to suffer the barbarity of the "judgements of God", the trials of fire and water: and often for insignificant reasons.

The Italian poet Matteo Bandello writes in the 16th century: "This one killed his wife because he suspected (!) of her infidelity; that one strangled his daughter because he had married in secret; that one, finally, had his sister killed...".

because she didn't want to marry according to her own criteria! It is a great cruelty that we all want to do what we want to do and the poor women are not allowed to do the same. If they do something that displeases us, there we are at once, with rope, dagger or poison in hand. Or with the chastity belt, that ingenious instrument that Christians put on their women from the 13th century onwards to help them respect marital fidelity and which, although it allowed urination and defecation, prevented - or pretended to prevent - access to the "demonic gates". It was only intended to do so, because while men were on a journey or were fighting

In distant crusades - with the help of many prostitutes (infra) - the keys to the "harem of the Christians" circulated from hand to hand. In the West, the gadget became widespread in the 15th and 16th centuries; their technical perfection increased, and sometimes art enthusiasts adorned them with precious pieces of goldsmith's work. In Catholic Spain, women wore them until the beginning of the 19th century ^[204].

Wife whipping: canonically supported until 1918

Moreover, men had the right to whip their wives throughout the Middle Ages. He was her judge and could resort to the most extreme punishments; as the literature of the time illustrates, he could beat her, whip her and apply hooks to her.

"until blood" flowed "out of a hundred wounds" or until it collapsed.

"as dead". She, on the other hand, was to fear him, honour him and love him tenderly.

Even during the era of *courtoisie*, of courtly love - which, if it did not improve the legal status of the noblewoman, at least made her lot more bearable - the knight could spank his wife almost any time he wanted, as long as he did not break any limbs. A statute of the town of Villefranche in the 13th century has no qualms about permitting beatings,

"as long as she does not die". And in Bavaria, where women remained subject to "minor punitive law" until 1900, the municipal law code of Ruprecht of Freising (1328) intended that only a husband who had "undeservedly" beaten his wife to death should be punished.

The secular judiciary usually intervened reluctantly. A code of Passau from the late Middle Ages states that "what a man has to deal with his wife is not the concern of any secular court and carries only spiritual penalties". And in Breslau, a husband who was sued for cruelty in the 14th century had to promise that he would "henceforth only beat and punish his partner? with the rod, which is sufficient and befits a good man, according to loyalty and faith"....

according to faith, above all!

For apart from the fact that moral theology has upheld the *communis opinio* -In the modern era, too, it was also canonically endorsed that "command" in the family belonged to one person only, i.e. the father, and the whipping of women was also canonically endorsed, and this right of men was favoured to the full extent of the law. According to Thomas Aquinas (cf. above), a man was only to go to court in case of repudiation or homicide. The Corpus Juris Canonici, the code in force in the Catholic Church until 1918, obliged the wife to follow her husband everywhere; the latter could declare his wife's promises null and void; he could also beat her, lock her up, bind her and force her to fast ^[205].

Means of extreme education" or respect for folklore?

Even today, a certain Roman moralist - who, as a matter of principle, forbids a man to beat his wife - would understand the punishment if it were a matter of

The confessor should not allow himself to be entangled by complaints, "especially from women", but should exhort, "especially from women", "to do everything possible to ensure that the man's "right" was recognised and that he used it as a means of extreme education". On the contrary: the confessor was not to allow himself to be entangled by complaints, "especially from the woman", but was to exhort, "especially the woman", to "do everything possible to ensure that the man finds the house nice and pleasant".

In other words, licence is still given for the odd stick... if only, so to speak, as a concession to folklore. Not surprising, by the way, in an institution which for centuries allowed women to be beaten until they were crippled; which had them burned, drowned, impaled and buried alive; which tied them to horses to be butchered. (Only they were spared the gallows: for decorum's sake).) Almost every barbarity and humiliation was acceptable. And yet what seems to today's moral advocate to be the "worst degradation of women"?

What else could it be: an "anomalous" sexual relationship.

So who can be surprised that Luther also spoke out in favour of corporal punishment of women, or that he excluded them from ordination to the priesthood and sent them home? Take women away from their domestic duties and they are good for nothing.

In France, to the gallows

The power of the father was so great throughout the Middle Ages that secular law and moral theology allowed him to sell his children in case of necessity. "A man rightfully sells his child if he is forced to do so by necessity" admits the Swabian code, composed at the end of the 13th century on the basis of the German code. Medieval German law does not at any time include the *mundium* maternalis. Even in the event of the father's death, the guardian of the children had to remain a man, since the mother, who remained under guardianship throughout her life, could not represent them in society. The reception of the deeply misogynistic Roman law and the concept of *patria potestas* closed the way to a greater female influence, which was incipient in late German law, and put an end to any restriction of the father's power over the family. "In it the profile of God was drawn (...)".

Unmarried daughters either ended up in the convent or remained until their death in their father's house, completely subject to him. Unlike sons, they could not be emancipated and during their whole life they had no right to dispose of their patrimony.

At the beginning of the modern age, women's rights were still completely non-existent in many countries. Not even the Revolution of 1789 improved the situation. They revolted, especially in France, but to no avail. Olympe des Gouges died on the scaffold. Others, such as the Countess of Salm, Flora Tristan and George Sand, continued the struggle, supported by the Sansimonists, whose most extreme elements declared themselves devoted to the Great Mother; society mocked them, persecuted them, defamed them: women's liberation failed.

In France - where the statesman and historian Guillaume Guizot declares that "Providence has destined women for the home" (Providence was St Paul and Luther) - all women's clubs are banned in 1848, the "Year of Women". And the Code Napoleon, the civil code in force since 1804, prevented their emancipation for the rest of the century. Women had no political rights and the *mundium* matrimoniale remained ^[206]. French women did not obtain the right to vote and stand for election until 1945.

In England, cheaper than a horse

The situation in England was, if anything, even worse. A few lines by William Blackstone (died 1780) on the Common Law shed light on its miseries. "By marriage", writes this jurist still considered today as an authority on English law, "man and woman become one person (!) before the law: that is to say that, for the duration of the marriage, the legal existence of the woman is suppressed (!) or, at least, incorporated into the existence of the man and consolidated in it (...) She is below him and acts according to his impulse". Of course, she also sometimes worked on her own account, which does not seem to have increased her status. At the beginning of the 19th century, a tenant announced in a London newspaper the loss of his horse and, the next day, the (elopement) of his wife; he offered five guineas for the discovery of the animal and... four shillings for the recovery of his better half. The sale of women, by means of which the woman became the legitimate wife of the buyer, was legal in England until 1884.

As Kate Millett has previously pointed out, under the Common Law in force in the 19th century, the Anglo-Saxon woman underwent a "civil death" when she married, for she renounced "in practice all human rights, like the criminal when he is locked up"; before the law she was as "dead as the insane or the idiots". And Kit Moual writes that, at the time, the Englishwoman was on a par with "criminals, the mentally ill and the insolvent". She could not participate in elections or exercise a liberal profession; she could not sign papers or testify court; she could not control her income or manage her property. Whatever she earned during the marriage became the property of the man, who was expressly authorised by law to use "physical force" or "power" against her. Until 1923, the wife had no possibility of denouncing her husband's infidelity, and until 1925, the father's right of guardianship prevailed over the mother's. Until then, the English woman's legal independence was guaranteed worse than that of the Babylonian woman in the Code of Hammurabi from about 1700 BC. Until then, the legal independence of the English woman was guaranteed worse than that of the Babylonian woman in the Code of Hammurabi, circa 1700 BC. C.

Bertha Von Suttner and the "big Bertha".

Throughout the 19th century, women's social and economic opportunities depended primarily on the position of their husband, father or brother. And with the exception of a few female rulers, political power remained exclusively in the hands of men. In Bavaria, for example, women were only allowed to participate in assemblies on public affairs in 1898.

However, this permanent subjugation of women and the triumph of the "stronger sex" after 1848 had a devastating influence on the fate of society and, in particular, as Friedrich Heer emphasises, on the increasing degree of neurosis in the political environment. People's ideologies, "their nationalism, their imperialism, their fears and their hatred were, until 1950, the determining factors in Europe's expansionism, in its internal and external wars". As had happened, on the French side, with George Sand, in the German-speaking world Bertha von Suttner, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905, was the object of mockery and libels that turned her into a "Pazberta", the "peace witch" or the "peace fury".

"The German men could not oppose this woman with anything but the Big Bertha, the big cannon aimed at Paris in 1914" [207].

2. THE PROLETARIATS

Needless to say, the Christian West proved even more catastrophic for women of the lower classes.

"(...) Like heads of cattle or property".

Throughout the Middle Ages, serfs were sold, traded and given away by their lords at will. Flogging was a daily occurrence. According to the Lex Salica, written down by monks in the 6th century, the number of strokes an ancilla could receive ranged from one hundred and twenty to two hundred and forty.

In the serrallos of the convents, the girls had to do all kinds of work, from shearing sheep and mowing flax to cleaning the stables, scrubbing, grinding grain or cultivating the fields. "They were their lord's capital, like cattle or property, and their labour represented part of the income on which the lord lived.

In modern times, the only compensation these women often received was a meagre diet. And henceforth, their pay was always far below that of men, who were already poorly paid. In East Prussia in 1420, a servant received three marks a year, and a maid one mark. On a late medieval Franconian estate, servants were paid five to eight guilders and maids three. In the parish of Our Lady of Ingolstadt at the beginning of the 16th century, day labourers were paid ten to fourteen pence a day, stonecutters sixteen to twenty-four pence, and women workers eight to ten pence (a lean pig cost one pound eight shillings two hundred and forty pence).

Often, these women were also servants from a sexual point of view, literally. In the Christian courts of the early Middle Ages, their freedom was almost as limited as in a Muslim harem. Similarly, the seraglio of the great manor courts served at the same time as a brothel for the lord, his comrades and his guests. Subsequently, many maids left the manors, forming the social group of the wandering women, the outlaw whores of the Middle Ages. And, of course, it was these serrallos that gave rise to the stable mansebras, most of which were known by that name: "serrallos".

Finally, unfree women suffered the vexation of the *ius primae noctis*, which, in exchange for permission to marry, granted the master the right of first intercourse with the bride. Many bourgeois of the modern age continued to call their maidservants the "master's chamber pots" because they were at their disposal all night long, like the chamber pot. For the same reason, many French women called their maids "les pissepots de nos maris".

In the city, young women from the lower classes had essentially only three possibilities for survival: domestic service, prostitution and the convent. But none of these three possibilities offered a bearable life. Nor did a fourth possibility: work in the workshop, which, moreover, was rarely considered and was frowned upon, especially by the Church ^[208].

In early capitalism, with both hands and feet at the same time

After the Reformation, women were expelled from the urban professions, but in early capitalism they were once again exploited with particular severity. Their work was counted as an "additional" contribution to the family income, which could always be justified by the old Christian idea that women belonged to the household.

In the 19th century, there were many industrialists who even preferred to employ female energies. The cynical explanation: "They are more zealous in their work and get paid less". That is why they died younger. Half of the silk workers fell ill with consumption before they had finished their apprenticeship! In 1831, these women worked seventeen hours a day. In the trimmings workshops in Lyon, some of them worked for "with their hands and feet at the same time, practically hanging from the straps".

The result of this servitude was a fall in men's wages. Women often pushed men out of work, so that men sat at home while women went to the factory to do the same work for less money.

In England, women were often subjected to exploitation worse than that of ancient slavery: Engels found in Manchester countless ragged women and children, "as filthy as pigs in the slag heaps and ponds". As the galleries of the mines were too narrow for the horses, the "draggers" towed the wagons and carried loads weighing between fifty and

One hundred and fifty kilos for twelve, fourteen or sixteen hours a day; in exceptional cases, more. The testimony of a worker in Little Bolton's coal mines begins: "I have a belt around my waist and a chain between my legs and I go on all fours". In the pit where the 37-year-old works, the water covers her clogs and sometimes comes up to her thighs. "I'm not as strong as I used to be, and I can't stand the work as well. I've been digging coal out of my skin; the belt and chain are worse when you're pregnant. My husband often beats me when I don't feel like it".

These women, most of whom suffered from pelvic deformity, had to maintain the same work rhythm almost up to the moment of childbirth, as Heinrich Wilhelm Bensen confirms in 1847. "As a rule, the woman returns to full work eight days later. The child is left in a dirty room, without space or air, languishing on poor and completely inadequate food, and lulled to sleep by liquor or opium. Consequently, many workers' children were lost in the early years (...)".

In a footnote to *Capital*, Marx includes the following quotation: "Herr E., a manufacturer, informed me that he employs exclusively women in his mechanical workshops; he prefers married women, especially those who leave a family at home and whose maintenance depends on them; they are more careful and docile than unmarried women and strain their strength to the utmost to provide for themselves. Of course, children were often used, who were still much cheaper and often died of exhaustion.

A report of the Prussian Department of the Interior summarises the situation as follows: "A very large proportion of our female workers earn wages that do not cover the minimum necessities of life, which is why they are faced with the dilemma of either seeking supplementary income in prostitution or succumbing to the inescapable consequences of physical and spiritual ruin" ([209]).

3. WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Since the powerful lived largely off the ignorance of the masses, the knowledge that the majority - and especially women - received was only that which was indispensable, an assertion that the few exceptions only corroborate. Until the 20th century, the history of culture was a male affair.

Obviously, girls were better educated at court; girls of the social elite learned to read and write; but even these - who otherwise often ended up as simple nuns - read little more than prayers, catechisms and biblical legends. And most of the remainder were either tending geese or working at home or in the fields, and died illiterate. Even when some boast of women's education in the Middle Ages, as is still erroneously and fallaciously done, they admit that

"women (...) were taken into account only in isolated cases", that the Christian religion was to educate women, "naturally (!), only to a certain extent" and "for the express purpose - and in principle exclusively - of forming them from a religious and moral point of view" or, as it is also said, "purely clerical".

Francis Barberino, who wondered in the time of Philip the Fair whether it would be advisable to instruct daughters in reading and writing, answered with a resounding "no". And Luther, a staunch advocate of the confinement of women to the home, was of the opinion that an hour's schooling a day would suffice.

It was not until the Renaissance, with the resurrection of classical antiquity and the recognition of the personality, that the situation of women came closer to that of men, especially in Italy; then they could begin to study and, eventually, to teach. As one Catholic writes, "the educational ideal that was being defended was no longer the Christian ideal of the Middle Ages (...)" Exactly.

Of course, the Church continued to cherish this ideal. And so it ruined or seriously neglected the education of young girls - even when it was the hands of nuns - and could invoke the Bible for this: "I do not permit a woman to teach". Until the nineteenth century, women were excluded from the

cultural life as well as political life. Wilhelm Busch could joke about it:

She is in her chair, still in her dressing gown, he is reading the local press, and while she continues to knit, he tells her only the basics.

In the 20th century, some Western countries still excluded women from higher education. New York's first female medical doctor qualified in 1849. England, Sweden, the Netherlands, Russia and Switzerland did not admit women to medical school until the 1970s - and then only with permission; in Germany it was not until 1889, and even then only with special permission from the Minister of Culture, the rector and the respective professors. Until 1920, Oxford continued to award different degrees to men and women. And in 1960 there were still 2,328 female professors in Germany compared to only thirteen female professors ^[210].

4. WOMEN AND MEDICINE

The Christian defamation of women and their bodies also had an impact on the natural sciences, especially medicine. This hindered research on the female body and caused countless victims, all the more so since women's health - for understandable reasons - was weaker than that of men. François de la Boe, a prominent 17th century physician, already attributed the female propensity for the most frequent nervous diseases, as laconically as he rightly did, to "the fact that a being who always lives in subjection to man must necessarily feel sad and fearful, and therefore falls ill so easily".

In the Middle Ages it was considered "unseemly" for a man to assist a woman in childbirth. The corresponding practice was almost exclusively in the hands of midwives, although the books they used were written by men. So, because of the Christian sense of shame, theory and practice were kept separate until

the 17th century. It was only then that schools for midwives became widespread, with some professorships in midwifery also being established.

The Enlightenment era brought modern state health care, individual hygiene and the improvement of the social position of women, is why it has rightly been called "the century of women".

Gynaecology also took advantage of this. It was at this time that the anatomy and physiology of women were studied in greater detail, when the first fundamental research into the differences between the male and female body was carried out, and when John Hunter coined the concept of secondary sexual characteristics.

Nevertheless, there was still plenty of religiously imprinted nonsense, and even doctors believed that sterility was caused by magical elements. Linnaeus himself - the son of a preacher - omitted the female sexual organs from his *Treatise on Nature* as "something horrible". Still in the middle of the 19th century, Ferdinand Jahn, the reputed court physician of Meiningen, compares pathological infection with sexual reproduction, with the process that begins in the female genitalia after conception; in all this there remains something of St. Augustine's sexual disgust: "*inter faeces et urinam nascimur*" (supra).

In Victorian England, the rigorous examination of a woman was almost impossible. Patients would pinpoint the location of their own pain by means of dolls in the consulting rooms. The doctor could then feel the corresponding places the blouse and, of course, only in the presence of the husband or mother. In 1891, the Englishman William Goodell described his fight against the tradition of not operating on menstruating women - since it had been taught and believed since time immemorial that the presence of menstruating women "would stain religious festivals and might sour the milk, interrupt the fermentation of wine and bring much misfortune on all sides" (cf. *infra*).

-And if in past centuries being sexually ill was already a tragedy in itself for a man (except, to a certain extent, in the tolerant 18th century), for a woman it was a crime ⁽¹²¹¹⁾.

5. THE BEGINNINGS OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

In the meantime, Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815-1887) had discovered matriarchy. The hitherto almost undisputed primacy of the patriarchal order began to break down, which had a significant influence on sociological research. Society became increasingly aware of the status of women, appreciated them in their own right, and over time a profound change took place, with women's political, social, economic and sexual rights multiplying; and all this, not by chance, at a time when the power of the Church was steadily diminishing.

A setback under fascism

Under fascism, with its unequivocal male supremacy, this trend changed direction. The emancipation of women was rigorously curbed and women themselves were placed at the service of both political power and their husbands, "aspiring to a reunion with the Church, out of the old respect for the family and following a long tradition of female slavery".

The sexual policy of the Nazis, who held Communism and Judaism responsible for "sexual freedom" in the Weimar Republic, was openly in tune with the maxims of Christian morality. Women were again relegated to the home: they were forbidden to serve as judges and, in 1936, were excluded from any function in the administration of justice; they were also removed from the Reichstag and, in a sense, lowered to the status of brood mare. And both the expulsion from public life and the verbose propaganda in favour of motherhood prolonged the analogous mystical idealisation of the Church: a fanatical birthing machine in both cases.

Communism - which, for the time being, remains for the Church the most odious anti-clerical movement of the 20th century - granted women at least economic equality: in Russia, they receive the same salary as men. But Soviet sexual morality is in some respects so pactful that it has become a form of sexual slavery.

as the Catholic one. It is clear that there are affinities in both systems and that, in fact, there is no sexual equality there or anywhere else.

At present, the disadvantages remain

Even today, the psychological situation of women - and not only their psychological situation - is still more conflictive than that of men. As in Engels' time, the family is still based, today, on the The "domestic slavery" of women; the man represents the "bourgeoisie", the woman the "proletariat". The old status of women as chattel still underlies the fact that they lose their name when they marry or that they have to adopt the man's domicile. Until the middle of this , in countries such as Spain and Portugal, a woman cannot, without her husband's permission, take part in civil cases or acquire anything, even if it is free. In Spain, the daughter cannot leave the paternal domicile before her twenty-fifth birthday unless she enters a convent or marries, making the Church and the husband her absolute masters.

In the societies of many countries, women still occupy an inferior status, as shown in almost all areas: economics, politics and religion. Women heads of government have been an exception, even in democratic Europe.

In the labour market, women are still, in most cases, very poorly paid. In Sweden, where they have roughly the same rights as men, they earn one third less than men; and in many other Western countries, especially Spain and the United States, the difference is half as great, as they face greater obstacles in accessing better paid jobs and positions of greater responsibility.

Only 6% of the members of the Bundestag are women; in the Central Committee of the CPSU it is about 3%, in the American Congress between 1 and 2%, and the Senate is at present a purely male guild. Even in the UN - which has always fought against women's inequality and which in 1968 unanimously found that it still existed - women's rights are still being violated in the United Nations.

In a "serious discrimination", only six out of the two hundred and forty-five leadership positions are occupied by women.

Lately, the only countries that have had or still have female heads of government are non-Christian: India, Ceylon, Israel.

In the Church, women count for even less than in economics and politics. They have no way of gaining access to the hierarchy; according to one Catholic, their necessary "liberation" is only "taken into consideration by a few theologians", which means that it is only... desired. Amidst the rebukes and mockery, reference is made to the fact that many girls "consider themselves too good to work at home. For them, such work is not intellectual enough, not important enough, not prominent enough, not lucrative enough. Their (foolish) thoughts fly higher: they would like something scientific, artistic, creative, or at least commercial". And yet, "before God (...), a rag is as precious as a silk tablecloth. Was not the Mother of Christ a 'simple' housewife, uneducated and insignificant?"^[212].

Yes, this is how many would like women to remain. Living in small rooms full of children. And, from the age of thirty onwards, chaste as the Virgin.

CHAPTER 20

MARRIAGE

Jealousy, murder, suicide, all kinds of perversions, hypocrisy, endless frustrations and aggressions, total objectification of women (...) The life of a couple has been distorted into a life sentence and the fundamental tasks of marriage and the family, e.g. the responsible care of children, have been neglected. All this is part of the abundant harvest of the anti-sexual morality of the churches, which continue to defend their destructive work on human sexuality against all, by all means and in the name of Christ, even today (...)

DEMOSTHENES SAVRAMIS, theologian^[213]

1. MARRIAGE, DENIGRATED

It is based on the same act as prostitution. Therefore, it is best for people not to touch any woman.

TERTULIANUS, Father of the Church

For where there is death, there is marriage, and where there is no marriage, there is no death.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER, Doctor of the Church

Anathema to anyone who says (...) that it is not better and holier to remain a virgin or celibate than to marry.

Council of Trent ^[214]

There is no word of Christ against marriage. His brothers and his first disciples were married (supra). The New Testament stresses that "no man ever hated his own flesh" and that women "will be saved by their childbearing" and commands that "young women should marry, bear children and manage their own household". Of course the Book of Books, which is full of contradictions, also praises the one who "does not defile himself with women". And the denigration began with St. Paul (supra) and has continued afterwards with numerous references to his doctrine or with forgeries using his name. In some late apocrypha, Jesus himself commands that "the unmarried man should not marry" and announces that he has come to "undo the work of women".

"Nothing remarkable in favour of the marriage status".

Marriage was also fought against within the official Church. At the time of conversion, it was considered essential for spouses to separate and live chastely; married people were looked down upon and denied the hope of salvation. It is true that the clergy intervened against the extremists and sometimes even let slip a few expressions of admiration for marriage; but all these are overshadowed by the opposite tendency, and from a general point of view Luther is right when he notes that "none of the Fathers has written anything remarkable in favour of the married state", which is explained as a concession to the "spirit of the age"; a formula which allows everything to be excused: massacres of pagans, persecution of Jews, crusades. Inquisition, witchcraft trials, collaboration with fascism, etc. (cf. above).

It is no accident that all the Fathers of the Church praise virginity - many of them in specific treatises on the subject - and that none of them write an apologia for marriage; that they try to convert married people to asceticism and invent edifying stories of people who, before their wedding night, swear to each other to remain chaste for the rest of their lives; that parents were not reproached for selling their children - with their consent - in order to enter a convent; that, as a result of the continuous propaganda in favour of celibacy, some believed that extra-marital relations were more excusable than marital ones, a view which even necessitated the intervention of more than one synod. It is no coincidence that the Church has canonised legions of virgins and widows, yet not a single saint - not a single saint - is a saint by virtue of her "married life".

At the Second Vatican Council in 1964, only unmarried women and widows admitted as a lay group. And of whom, as a Catholic publication joked at the time, one could say that of the Italian woman who, having been unfavoured by nature, denied it any favour:

"is ugly as a Catholic Action woman" ^[215].

From St. Justin to Origen: Is it better to be a eunuch than married?

According to St. Justin, the foremost apologist of the second century, all marriage is illegal, insofar as it is linked to the satisfaction of a perverse pleasure. (The saint goes so far as to commend the conduct of a young man who has decided to castrate himself).

Similarly, Tertullian praises those "who offer themselves as eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God"; he also compares marriage to prostitution and praises those who do without women.

Clement of Alexandria is the first Christian to make the manufacture of children a patriotic duty - the forerunner of other, more nefarious attitudes - but he aspires to a completely emotion-free reproduction, followed by abstinence.

(And it even interprets intercourse as a pernicious disease, as a "little epilepsy").

Clement's successor, Origen, "the first Catholic theologian in every sense of the word", the "forerunner of scholasticism", calls everything sexual "dishonest" (*inhonestum*), including the couple's prayer in the matrimonial bedroom, which may well have been the first step towards that ecclesiastical prescription forbidding the building of chapels under such bedrooms. Going further. Origen teaches that the Holy Spirit vanishes during sexual contact; finally, this man who emasculated himself in order to be chaste is responsible for a gradation that is still present in the missals: 1. martyrs; 2. virgins; 3. widows; 4. married.

Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose

According to St. Jerome, sexual intercourse disqualifies a person for prayer. "Either we pray constantly and are virgins, or we cease to pray in order to live a married life". The only thing this saint appreciates married people for is that they beget virgins. "If it is good not to touch a woman" he teaches, invoking St. Paul, "then it is bad to touch her"; married people live "in the manner of beasts"; people, when they lie with women, "are no different from pigs and irrational animals".

And St. Augustine? He is the inspirer of the medieval opinion according to which copulation is an impediment to communion. He asserts that "the chastity of the unmarried is better than that of the married"; that "a mother, since she was married, will occupy a place in Heaven inferior to that of her daughter who was a virgin"; he says that only married couples who maintain complete abstinence are "true marriages" and that married couples who renounce "camal intercourse" form "a more holy couple": a truly unsurpassed display of conceptual misrepresentation; and he adds that he would prefer children to be "sown by hand, like cereal". All in all. St. Augustine is "the theologian of Christian marriage".

Despite this sample - which could almost be increased at will - the apologists resort to the "Fathers" when speaking of marriage; and not to defame it, but to defend it. As a sample, one theologian wants to "to show by means of an example - conveniently delimited by him - how inaccurate and unjust it is to make such partial imputations as those mentioned to all (!) the Fathers of the Church". He goes on to quote, among others, St. Ambrose: "Marriage is honourable, but continence is more honourable; for if he who gives his virginity in marriage works well, he who does not give it works better". "The bondage of marriage is good, but it is a bondage; the *coniugium* is good, but it derives from "iugum": from a worldly yoke". "(...) We do not forbid a second marriage, but we do not advise it". In the end, marriage would be a "burden", a "servitude", a "disturbance of the flesh". And finally, our theologian thinks that "today some of the expressions of the doctors of early Christianity seem strange and harsh". He blames this (with a modest footnote) on the "rhetoric of that time", which was fond of "antitheses and exaggerations" and writes that "the Fathers were strongly influenced by it (...)" admitting, in essence, what he has just contested ^[216].

In reality, for a long time, the Church only accepted marriage as a necessary evil, which can be illustrated by the history of the marriage bond itself.

Civil marriage, recognised until the 16th century

Although the institution of the sacrament of marriage would have taken place "in Paradise", monogamy in fact came from paganism, and for centuries weddings were not a religious matter. In Eastern Europe, nuptial blessings did not become compulsory until the 9th century (and even then, the bishop acquires the right to receive a fee in return!) At the same time, in Western Europe, Pope Nicholas I considers such a religious ceremony unnecessary. The consent of the spouses before the priest is not introduced until the

11th and 12th centuries, which is when the idea of marriage as a sacrament arose. But marriages contracted without this procedure continued to be recognised until the 16th century, until the Council of Trent. Only from then on can we speak of an institutionalised sacrament.

But the Tridentinum also declared anathema to anyone who said that celibacy and virginity were not "better and holier" (*melius ac beatius*), which has been the official position of the Church to this day, a position that clearly implies a devaluation of marriage (and sexuality). For, if one did not pay tribute to the caste pride of many clerics, if one did not declare that priests and friars were better than "slaves of the marriage bed", according to the formula maintained by the *Corpus Juris Canonici*, what other advantage could the former have over the latter?

So the slander of the famous Bavarian court secretary Agidius Albertinus - who claimed that "fornications outside marriage do not occur daily, but the fornications of married people happen every day, every hour, uninterruptedly" - are not a peculiarity of the 17th century; In the twentieth century there is still praise - though certainly with a fainter echo every day - of the "grace of celibacy", or of "virginity as the highest way of life"; there is affirmation of "the objective superiority of virginity over marriage", or "motherhood", or "the simple satisfaction of man's pleasure"; in a word, there are those who are still paralysed by the virginity complex of antiquity: even after Vatican II which, despite having vindicated the "dignity" of marriage, decrees, referring to future clerics, that "they must clearly recognise the pre-eminence of virginity consecrated to Christ (...)".

As for civil marriage - which some countries introduced in the 16th century, although most states did not do so until the 19th century - Catholics still considered it at the beginning of the century (and with ecclesiastical licence) "an odious and repugnant thing (...) a horrible degradation of the person and especially of the Christian, inasmuch as it places the propagation of the human race on the same level as the reproduction of animals".

Today, however, one in three marriages is celebrated in front of the civil registrar.

*And even if the priest does not bless, it is a legal marriage:
long live the bride and groom and children to come!*^[217]

2. DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING MARRIED

In accordance with its ascetic ideology, the Church made weddings difficult from the beginning with a large number of prohibitions. Among these, it distinguishes between "diriment impediments" which are grounds for annulment, such as impotence, consanguinity or difference of religion, and the "impediments" which are grounds for annulment, such as impotence, consanguinity or difference of religion.

The "impediments" that make a marriage unlawful, such as close kinship and difference in religious denomination. This is all the more important given that it was often included in state jurisdictions.

Consanguinity played a particularly important role. In some non-Christian societies, marriage between relatives has been relatively common, especially among the ancient Peruvians, who married their mothers, sisters and daughters, publicly and without reservation of any kind. In Egypt, pharaohs were obliged to marry their daughters for generations: Cleopatra, for example, was the result of one such union. The Avesta, the sacred book of the ancient Persians, recommends marriage between siblings as a "work of devotion" and among the Germans these links were not exceptional either.

The further away the danger...

Christianity, on the other hand, forbade marriage between relatives even in the most distant degrees - in the most extreme case, up to the fourteenth degree, according to Roman reckoning - in accordance with the

The more distant the danger, the easier it is to avoid falling. It has been calculated that the average number of living relatives in the fourteenth degree is sixteen thousand people. But if all forms of kinship are taken into account, the figure is 1,048,576 people.

St. Basil, in the fourth century, imposed a fifteen-year penance for an incestuous marriage. In the early Middle Ages, a penitential of the Roman Church envisaged a penalty of seven years for marriages between relatives up to the seventh degree, twelve years for a marriage between relatives of the fifth degree and fifteen years if the kinship was of the third degree. And the punishment of the secular power included deprivation of office and profit (*infra*).

In the 11th century, the prohibition of marriages up to the seventh degree was repeatedly recalled and became "common law". And today, in the (supposedly religiously indifferent) Federal Republic, brothers-in-law are forbidden to marry, which is in contradiction to the constitution and refers to canon law, according to which a marriage is invalid both between relatives in the direct line - all ancestors and descendants (children, parents, grandparents, etc.) - and between collateral relatives up to and including the third degree (siblings, first cousins, etc.).

The reasons given by the Church to justify the incest taboo were appropriate to the object. Thus, Pope Leo III (795-816), in order to explain to the Bavarian bishops the prohibition of marriage until the seventh generation, argued that the Lord had rested from all his labours on the seventh day.

The clergy also devised some impediments to marriage between "spiritual" relatives. It was then claimed that "spiritual kinship is above bodily kinship". This kind of decree was also incorporated into secular law. In 721, the synod of Rome, presided over by Gregory II, threatened with excommunication a godfather who married his comadre (*commater*). Shortly afterwards, Pope Zacharias renewed the prohibition and, in a letter to Pipinus, called marriage with a commater or her daughter a "crime and a grave sin against God and his angels". Finally, not even the witnesses of the same baptism were allowed to

to marry each other. And today, according to ecclesiastical law, marriage between a baptised person and one of his godparents or the minister of baptism (if not a priest) is invalid because of "spiritual kinship". (On the other hand, since the millions of children of concubines caused by the prohibition of marital separation in Italy are not even considered relatives of their parents, a father can marry his own daughter!)

Remarriage

The Romans already disapproved of remarriage and widows who avoided it were held in high esteem and not infrequently remembered on tombstones with honorific titles (*univira*, *uninupta*).

Around the year 180, there were some Catholic voices that were radically opposed to a second marriage. In the ancient Church, a second or third marriage after the death of a spouse was never looked upon favourably. It was considered an "honest fornicatio" and ended up being severely punished, becoming a "bigamous marriage".

"Why do you want to do again what has already harmed you?" argues St. Jerome against a widow. "The dog goes back to his spitting and the sow, after bathing, wallows again in the mud."

For more than a millennium, second marriages were in many places denied priestly blessing, and as late as 1957, Pius XII declared that it was not desirable for the surviving spouse to remarry ^([218]).

But the Church, in addition to making it difficult to remarry after the death of one of the spouses, consistently opposed sexual relations within marriage.

3. THE SEVERE RESTRICTION OF SEXUAL RELATIONS

Marriage can and should be a Heaven on Earth, but on the assumption that each is committed to dying in life.

"Remarks to prospective spouses".

I am the Lord your God and one day I will call you to account for how you have lived your marriage! An institution created by Me must be lived according to My will!

"Beloved God" (with ecclesiastical licence)

"In fact, there was not much free time left".

Days of abstinence were not regulated in general, but they were common everywhere and so numerous that even Catholics today must admit that "in fact, there was not much free time left". Sexual intercourse was forbidden on Sundays and feast days - there were plenty of them at that time (in Cologne, a hundred days a year!) - as well on Wednesdays and Fridays, or Fridays and Saturdays, or, according to some of the early scholastics, every Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. In addition, continence was required on days of prayer and penance, in the octaves of Easter and Pentecost, in Lent and Advent; and also, at least in the first centuries of the Middle Ages, during pregnancy or in the last three months of pregnancy and, throughout the Middle Ages, after childbirth: thirty-six days if it was a boy, and fifty-six if it was a girl (of lesser value).

Throughout the early Middle Ages, married couples were also forbidden to have sex a few days before communion: usually three, but sometimes more; according to an eighth-century book of penances of the Roman Church, seven days before and seven days after. The Council of Trent still required at least three days of abstinence beforehand,

which, in practice, has remained in force up to our century. Coitus and the ensuing pleasure stained the body and soul, so that, after intercourse, married people could not even go to mass without having washed beforehand. Often, even then, they had to stay outside for a while, according to a tradition that was followed in the Roman Church for centuries.

According to a related custom, first documented in Gaul, newlyweds avoided the house of the Lord for thirty days, after which they had to do penance and communion for another forty days. Naturally, the honeymoon was full of pleasures and, precisely for this reason, of sins (see *infra*).

In Russia, married couples were not allowed inside the churches after the union; they had to listen to the mass standing at the entrance. In the middle of the 18th century, the Tsar and Tsarina did not walk past any crosses in the morning after they had gone to bed together because they were "impure" and "in sin".

Finally, sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman was also forbidden almost until the end of the Middle Ages; the Old Testament prescribed the death penalty in this case.

As a result of all these provisions, Catholic married couples had to keep chastity for about eight months of the year; and in the middle centuries of the Middle Ages, and even later, almost half of the year.

These obligations were strictly and repeatedly inculcated by preachers, confessors, penitential books and synods, accompanied, of course, by corresponding punishments.

Moreover, the horrible consequences of divine vengeance awaited the disobedient. St. Caesarius of Arles and St. Gregory of Tours prophesied that those who defiled themselves on the days of obligatory chastity would, as a result of their evil deed, have children who were lepers, epileptics, deformed or possessed by the Devil. The Church Fathers also pointed to sexual intercourse with menstruating women as the source of diseased or deformed offspring - a "scientific" argument that was given credence for many centuries.

The "marriage of Joseph" or four times in one night?

Theologians were only happy if the spouses kept total abstinence. Joseph's marriage" - according to the Bible, there was no doubt about the chastity of Mary and Joseph - became the ideal of this misrepresentation-friendly religion. Although marriage had been declared a sacrament, the fictitious marriage was celebrated as a sublime enterprise for which the highest rewards awaited in the Hereafter, and some married princes and princesses who had lived "celibately" were canonised: Emperor Henry II, his wife Cunegunda, or Hedwig, wife of Duke Henry I of Silesia and patron saint of Silesia, who needed 22 years of marriage to decide for chastity.

Eventually, it was only punished to demand the marriage debit in days of chastity, while the obligation to fulfil it existed instead. And finally the numerous sexual obstacles were no longer in effect. People were becoming more and more progressive. In the century of the Enlightenment, Alphonsus Liguori, Doctor of the Church, already wondered whether it was a sin to refuse, after three coitus on the same night, a fourth. In any case, according to a well-known 20th century moralist, "it is not necessary, as a general rule, to agree to a second request within twenty-four hours".^[219]

4. WHY MARRIAGE HAS BEEN TOLERATED

That is why the maiden has her slit, which provides her (the man) with the remedy to avoid pollutions and adulteries.

MARTIN LUTHER

(...) to bring new offspring into the Church of Christ, to procreate fellow citizens of the saints and domestics of God, so that the people devoted to the worship of God and of our Saviour may increase daily (...).

The suppression of the days of chastity was by no means a matter of liberality, human understanding or kindness. On the contrary, it was done because the confessors knew very well that often - to use Oscar Wilde's words - the happiness of the married man depends on the woman he has not married, so more freedom in marriage was granted for the sole purpose of preventing the occasional escapade. This is the crux of the matter: the repression of extramarital copulation has been the main reason why Christianity has tolerated marriage.

St. Paul, the first Christian author, believed that marriage was permissible only "for the sake of (avoiding) fornication" (*supra*). Husbands and wives could only separate, by mutual agreement, to pray, and then they were to be reunited immediately, lest Satan should lead them into temptation.

This Pauline motive, to guarantee the salvation of the soul by preventing extramarital lust, was taken up by other authors, especially by St. Augustine, and its importance did not cease to grow until the great age of scholasticism. The Church demanded more and more rigorously that the spouses should be constantly together because this ensured that they could fulfil their conjugal duty at any time, i.e. it was intended to prevent escapades.

The woman also had to follow the man anywhere - at rate, according to his wishes: on business trips or pilgrimages, to prison or exile. This was also true he was a vagabond or a dishonest and seriously sinful actor.

To avoid slips on the part of the wife, the husband was not allowed to mortify himself by fasting in such a way as to render him unfit for sexual intercourse. When the occasion arose and if no other place was available, it was also permissible to copulate in the church, especially "if lust threatened to dangerous extremes". Even lepers were obliged to fulfil the marriage duty. For the constant danger of sin was worse than

It would always be better to have "one child with leprosy than none at all"!

Cardinal Huguccio, the most important canonist of the 12th century, ponders the case of a husband who becomes pope against his wife's will. Does he still have to fulfil the conjugal duty? The expert answers yes, unless the wife can be converted to chastity. In such cases, the marriage is, as Albert the Great writes, a "remedy against lasciviousness" (*medicina contra concupiscentiam*) or, as Luther puts it, a "specific for fornication".

As soon as possible

An early marriage was a prophylaxis against extra-marital pleasures and against the loss of childish "innocence". According to an instruction of the early Church to the religious, "first of all, the youngest should marry as soon as possible in order to free them from the bonds of youthful passion". Later, betrothals between children were authorised by both religious and secular law. The constant rule was that "after the seventh year of life, as they say, boys and girls are already different. For that reason, it often happens that from that time they find a marriage engagement desirable". Things remained the same in the 18th century.

In any case, marriages between children who had not yet reached puberty could be celebrated until almost the end of the Middle Ages. Subsequently, the legal age of marriage (although there were always exceptions, especially if there was a proven capacity "*per aspectum corporis*", as required by the most scrupulous theologians) was set at fifteen for boys and thirteen for girls. And although the Church supported and reinforced the rights of the father, he could no longer annul the marriage of one of his children if he was of the required age.

In various Catholic countries these age limits are still in force. That is why separations between young married couples are so frequent everywhere; in Germany the number of such separations is

more than double the average for all separated marriages. And the children of such couples are almost always psychologically less stable; they are often abused and it is not uncommon for them to become asocial youngsters ^[220].

"(...) Let them keep on giving birth until they die, that's what they're there for".

In addition to avoiding extramarital relations, the Church had a second and more compelling reason for recognising marriage: the preservation of its own existence.

Significantly, this purely political motive was absurd for those early communities who firmly believed in a coming end of the world, for those early Christians who had been sold on the expectation of the end all along (cf. *supra*). For this very reason, St. Paul had reprobated the Cynic-Stoic view, which only authorised sexual relations between spouses if they were for the purpose of procreation. On the other hand, a hundred years later, Justin Martyr writes: "From the beginning, we entered into marriage for the sole purpose of raising children". Similarly, all the "Fathers" of the first three centuries rejected any sexual intercourse that was not aimed at having children. As the Church grew, its leaders no longer counted on the collapse of the world (if anything, they counted on their own power), and since childbearing was almost the only religious justification for marriage, any sexual contact that was not for this purpose came to be considered "sin". The Pauline motif - avoiding "lust" to ensure the salvation of the soul - then ceased to be relevant. Apart from a few exceptions, they did not resort to it again until St. Augustine, when they had risen to power, and, since from then on offspring did not seem to be above all else, its importance did not cease to increase in the early days of scholasticism and, above all, in the golden age of scholasticism.

In any case, the *procreatio prolis*, the multiplication of the humanity, it was always the most important of reasons; and that is because,

evidently, the Church was thinking of itself. Nor did Augustine believe that "this gender" of women had been "created to give any other service to man than to beget children".

Already in the preface to the ancient *Sacramentarium Gelasianum* it is said that the birth of a woman is "a mark of glory" for the world, because, despite its anti-feminism and antipathy to marriage, the Church valued the contribution of women "to the growth of the Christian community" and did not want - as had happened to the Marcionites and Valentinians - a ban on marriage to lead it to failure in its struggle to overtake other confessions.

Thus, one can be in no doubt that the Church welcomed newborn babies with open arms; that it eventually blessed bedrooms and marriage beds, creating "specific prayers against anything that might impede intercourse"; that St. Lydvina (died 1433) was given the honourable title of "Mother of Midwives" and "holy midwife" and so on. For Luther, giving birth was a woman's most important task and the foetus was more important than the mother, so much so that he once apostrophised: "Give us the child, and I tell you more, if you die for it, give yourself willingly, for you truly die for a noble work and out of obedience to God". Or: "If they exhaust themselves and end up dying by dint of pregnancy, it doesn't matter; let them go on giving birth until they die, for that is what they are there for" ^[221].

But here there is very little humanity and almost no sympathy for marriage. On the contrary, this is what is characteristically Christian about the institution of marriage, an institution which for two thousand years has scarcely tolerated eroticism, let alone pleasure, which, until more recent times, has been no more than a kind of partnership for biological purposes, a partnership of interests, a somewhat dirty business, despite having been "exalted" as a sacrament. In it, the woman was a birthing machine and motherhood was her main role, all the more so since, in the Middle Ages, the average infant mortality rate could be around 80%.

"Citoyennes, donnez des enfants à la patrie!"

After the Reformation, bigamy - which was propagated at all levels, even from the pulpits - was used to the point of resorting to the restoration of regions depopulated by war and violence. Obviously, the state wanted a large number of children to strengthen the economy and increase the offensive and defensive forces.

When men were needed, bigamy was not enough. In the 17th century, after a plague, the Icelandic government approved that girls could have up to "six bastards" without their honour suffering. The edict was so successful that it was soon repealed. And by the time of the French Revolution, which swept away many of the earlier sexual - that is, marital - prescriptions, reproduction was considered a patriotic duty. Women waved banners all over Paris that read: "Citoyennes, donnez des enfants à la patrie! Leur bonheur est assuré!" (Women citizens, give children to the fatherland. Their happiness is guaranteed).

In this respect, the clergy were particularly attuned to the Nazis (Hitler's papal chamberlain and vice-chancellor, Franz von Papen, was not alone in discovering that there was a correspondence "in every respect" between the two world views). The fact that Hitler had put an end to the most liberal phase of the Weimar Republic fitted in very well with the Church's plans. The "marriage clinics" that had been engaged in distributing contraceptives were closed down, pornography was banned, homosexuality was combated, as was abortion, and forced reproduction became a state slogan. So Catholics were given more opportunities to extol "fertility" as "blessing and commandment at once" and the "flourishing offspring" of "natural" Catholic families as "fountains of youth" for "the people and society". (Title: The practice of the imitation of Christ).

However, even in Soviet Russia people did not think very differently. It is true that monogamy and the bourgeois family were eliminated in 1917. But Lenin had already warned against sexual anarchy and demanded the maintenance of the family. In 1927 - after

After his death, free union and marriage were equated, ushering in the era of "separation postcards" (a unilateral declaration by the man or woman at the registry office was enough to dissolve the marriage). In 1936 - a year after five-year prison sentences were prescribed for authors and publishers of obscene illustrations and books - a new law restored indissoluble marriage. The state declared the family indispensable and would only allow separations by agreement of both spouses, imposing ever higher fees and making the process more difficult, especially during World War II, when "sound moral ideas" were spreading. Since 1950, eminent American sociologists believe that a more monogamous and Victorian idea of marriage dominates in the Soviet Union than in most Western countries ^[222].

The salvation of the family or "the ideal of today's philistine".

The call for the "salvation of the family", the "holy institution", has been echoing throughout the West for quite some time. But what is it about this organisation that makes it be promoted by systems as different as fascism and communism? It is that the family - "the principle or cell of the state", according to a postulate of St. Augustine (and, according to Engels, "the ideal of today's philistine, composed of sentimentality and domestic quarrels") - contributes mightily to the maintenance of the patriarchal social structure, to unconditional subordination.

The very etymology of the word is instructive. Originally, the Roman family referred exclusively to slaves: "famulus" means domestic slave and "family" was the collection of slaves and objects belonging to one man. And although the structure and functions of the family have changed over time, it has remained, *mutatis mutandis*, a kind of romantic serfdom, a miniature hierarchy, the first and most important school of sexual adaptation and repression.

The young person is subject to fear and dependence. Since cannot live in accordance with his nature, he is plunged into a permanent disorientation, which eventually drains his energies: and since he has to fight against himself, he cannot fight for himself, which of course also (and even more so) applies to the parents, led by Church and the State, but also by the child himself. For just as parents restrain, control and dispose of their child's emotions and motor skills, the child, in turn, keeps them subject to themselves.

Catholics want instinct to be "refined and mitigated" in marriage, to lose "sharpness" and for the child to be placed between the spouses to provide some "distance and healthy distraction". And, generally, the family ends up in this desired vital atrophy. The man is reduced to his wife and the woman to her husband, which is a guarantee both for the marriage and for the family which, by virtue of its patriarchal and authoritarian imprint, continues to procreate dependent and submissive individuals, firstly with regard to the powers of the parents, especially the father, and then with regard to the Church and the State.

"Domestic catechumenate" or "to have his tongue cut out".

Not surprisingly, in Catholicism, the role of the father as head of the family has had explicit religious sanction.

The early theologians, Augustine and John Chrysostom, warn parents again and again that in their home they administer a kind of bishopric. According to Thomas Aquinas, "in his house, the husband is like a king in his kingdom". And modern Fathers of the Church, such as the Archbishop of Freiburg, Conrad Grober (former co-operating member of the S. S. S., the Archbishop of Freiburg), even more eloquently ponder the fact that the husband is like a king in his kingdom.), even more eloquently ponder the special gifts of the head of the family "for the performance of the family care of souls, gifts which not even those who possess the priestly dignity have received in the same way and to the same extent"; the same people praise his "domestic priesthood", "the religious instruction of the offspring of the Church (catechumenate

The "task of imposing discipline, proper to kings", that is to say, everything that "is instilled in human beings from an early age (!)" and , later on, clerical verbiage makes flourish...

In addition to this kind of debasement of the child's soul *ab incunabilis*, what is expected of families, and especially of families with many children, is subordination. As a theologian emphasises: obedience "to the letter"; "because the mother who has many children cannot always be repeating things two or three times. And is there any virtue more important than the virtue of obedience? For all those who can only rule by unscrupulous tutelage, of course not.

Only then can it be understood why children who had acted in any way against their parents were called to account; for example, the laws of the city of Passau (1299) equated a simple insult to a father or mother with blasphemy and punished it with atrocious death: "Whoever grossly insults God, the saints, his father or his mother, shall have his tongue cut out". At least in the early centuries of the Middle Ages, it made no difference whether the offence was minor or serious; a simple impertinence, a bad word, could mean execution. And we have records that until the 17th century children had to "stand before their parents in trembling silence, on their feet or on their knees, and could only sit down with express permission".

Apart from forming obedient and compliant people, families, especially large families, have an added effect. As a certain Catholic writer knows, "the children of large families are hardly spoiled children. They soon learn to resign themselves; they soon learn to give up, to deprive themselves of certain things". How important this is when there is social misery; in Catholic countries like Italy or Spain, or in South America!

Hence theologians do not cease to insist on "the importance of the family in the realisation of the Kingdom of God on earth". The family is "the cell of the ever-shrinking People of God", "the sanctuary within the sanctuary of the Church", "ecclesiola in ecclesia". Precisely in 1942, in the middle of the World War, when the demand and consumption of cannon fodder was greater than ever, Pius XII, with the affectation that was proper to him, asked for space, light and air for the family, so that "the star of peace may shine forever over society (...)" The Vicar of Christ called on married couples to

"God's true co-workers", which brings us back to the central theme: the multiplication of the number of believers ^[223].

Less multiplication and more pleasure!

On many occasions this pope rebuked tolerant theologians, especially "those who deny that the primary purpose of marriage is the reproduction and education of children". "The truth is," affirms the twelfth Pius, "that marriage, as a natural institution in accordance with the will of God, does not have as its first and most profound purpose the perfection of the spouses, but the creation and formation of new lives (...) And this is true of all marriages (...)".

According to traditional church doctrine, the libido is only meant for reproduction. So, following Wilhelm Reich's correct deduction, as the most child-loving parents are satisfied with two, three or four, Christians should mate a maximum of four times in a lifetime, whereas a healthy organism, with a genital life lasting thirty to forty years, needs between three and four thousand sexual acts. On the other hand, research in recent years, and especially the work of Japanese and American sexologists, has shown that in about 90% of women the maximum of excitability coincides with the minimum of fertility, i.e. in the so-called "safe" days; an indication that the sexual instinct serves pleasure rather than reproduction.

For rutting and reproduction do not coincide even among animals; there are rather few species in which the sexual act results in immediate fertilisation. "There is no indication in biology or ethology that courtship or mating are inseparably linked to reproduction; quite the contrary" ^[224].

But the Church, besides putting an enormous number of obstacles in the way of marriage, besides radically limiting the sexual relations of the spouses, also tried to denaturalise them in those cases where it allowed them.

5 THE PROSCRIPTION OF PLEASURE IN MARRIAGE

God creates in the serene sanctuary of the mother's body, and you want to sully it with pleasure?

SAINT AMBROSE

The Church declared marriage indissoluble and extirpated all knowledge of the ars amandi; so it did everything in its power to ensure that the only form of sexuality it tolerated involved as little pleasure and as much suffering as possible.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

(Pauline) Christianity, completely dominated by the concepts of sin and salvation, is, on principle and on the basis of its rigorous dualism, the enemy of pleasure. Therefore, in the religion of love, the scarcer and blander it is, the better.

Nearly all sexual contact is considered sinful.

According to the New Testament, everyone should possess "his own receptacle with holiness and honour, and not dominated by passion, like the Gentiles". St. Augustine stresses again and again that spouses sin as soon as they indulge in pleasure, and should therefore pray: "forgive us our sins". Shortly afterwards, Leo I (440-461) teaches that there is no mother on earth in whom conception happens "without sin". And according to Gregory I (590-604), a leading slanderer of sexuality - both Gregory and Leo were given the title "Great" and were the only popes recognised as Doctors of the Church - the

husbands who enjoyed themselves during the act were, precisely, those who perverted (!) "the right order", so they had to give themselves up to mortification.

Around 610, St Isidore of Seville says that marriage is good "in itself" but that the "circumstances" connected with it are "bad", so he calls for daily atonements for the pleasure enjoyed. Most of the early scholastics regarded all sexual intercourse as sin. And in the middle ages, Innocent III writes: "who will deny that conjugal intercourse can never be consummated without the itching of the flesh, without the burning of lust, without the pain of the libido...". Everyone believes that intercourse is a vicious act.

According to many theologians, the sexual intercourse of the spouses was only innocent if the pleasure it entailed was abhorred. Let us think for a moment what kind of ideas they were inculcating! What a schizophrenia to procreate with a bad conscience! Along these lines, phrases such as: "the greater the pleasure, the greater the sin", or "the greater the pleasure, the greater the sin", or "the greater the pleasure, the greater the sin", or "the greater the sin", were long in use.

"whoever loves his wife with excessive passion commits adultery". For nothing grieved the clergy like the latter. Marriage was expected to have a disarticulating and desensitising effect, a continual subsiding, drying up, fading away, a process leading to what William Blake called "the Marriage hearse"; in short, as one Catholic confesses, to "exclude sexual pleasure as absolutely as possible from the conscience of the spouses" ([225]).

The reformer and "the nefarious pleasure".

Luther himself, who never tired of explaining "how despised and profaned" was "the institution of marriage under the papacy", who was so complacent in matrimonial matters that, in the case of male impotence, he authorised the assistance of third parties, who issued the well-known sentence "if the woman is unwilling, let the maiden come!" and even taught that it was "not contrary to the Scriptures" for someone to want to "cohabit with several women", or that living with one or two women was as irrelevant a matter as living with one or two.

Luther himself believed that the marriage act is always linked to sin, and to grave sin, "not differing in any way from adultery or fornication, inasmuch as sensual passion and unholy pleasure are involved", because we were "corrupted by Adam, conceived and born in sin" and "the marriage debt is never fulfilled without sin"; "the spouses cannot free themselves from sin".

According to the rebukes of the Reformer, sometimes almost more papist than the Pope (the "pig of Rome" or "the Devil's pig" as he used to say), the Church was condemned for "nefarious pleasure" rather than for its maniacal calls for murder, repeated for two thousand years, whenever they could be carried out in the form of hecatombs. Spouses could not even kiss each other with their tongues. As this practice had begun to be regarded as a venial sin, Pope Alexander VI condemned such a relaxation in 1666. Later, in more progressive times, the Catholic Church came to offer a casuistry that included exact indications as to how many millimetres the tongue could penetrate in order for the kiss to remain honest and where the limit of dishonesty began.

There have been times when the Church has forbidden the husband to see his wife naked. (And even today, he must "decide when and how it can be done, checking the reactions of his heart").

To reduce the pleasure of the couple, in the Middle Ages the so-called "monk's shirt" (*chemise cagoule*) was recommended, an invention that covered the body down to the feet, leaving only a narrow slit in the genital area, which was essential for procreating new Christians and celibates. This religious creation was also used by some particularly austere Indian tribes who wore it as a modest garment, with a discreet slit in the middle. When the Indians wanted to cast a grey hair into the air, they would cover the front and back in such a way that the lovers could not be seen. The accessory was lent by the chieftain, and a man's prestige was all the greater the fewer times he went to him to ask for it.

Anomalous" marital love: as bad as murder

If, in order to achieve more intense pleasure, an "unnatural" posture is chosen -a *situs ultra modum*, as the moralists say-, was, according to the general opinion of medieval theologians, a grave sin which for centuries was punished with various canonical penalties. Clearly, the celibates were least interested in marriage keeping the affections alive, and even less in increasing the pleasure of the flesh. On various occasions, permission "to enjoy one's wife differently" has been reprobated as heresy and any "anomalous" posture dictated by mere pleasure has been considered "a mortal sin of the same gravity as theft or murder"! Especially since, as some coryphaeans teach, a child who has been perversely begotten will inherit some defect and will have unnatural sinful tendencies. On the other hand, the camel, which only copulates once a year, and especially the elephant, which every three years, are held up as moral examples and "models of continence".

According to the *Manual for Confessors* drawn up by the Bishop of Le Mans, Mgr I. B. Bouvier (which, according to a preliminary warning, could only be obtained with the permission of the superior of the seminary or the vicar general of the diocese), spouses sin gravely if they "indulge in obscene acts or acts which offend against the natural sense of modesty", for example, "if the wife takes her husband's member in her mouth or places it between her breasts or inserts it into her anus". They sin gravely "especially if the man, in order to increase his pleasure" - which is always a *capital offence* - "takes her husband's member in her mouth or places it between her breasts or inserts it into her anus".

-He "takes his wife from behind, in the manner of animals, or if he places himself under her, thus altering the roles. This deviation is often the expression of a reprehensible concupiscence which does not want to be satisfied with having sexual intercourse in the usual way".

It is indeed difficult to understand why the "usual" act, i.e. with the woman on her back and the man on top of her, *facies ad faciem*, is the normal, correct and God's preferred act; why, of all the various possibilities, that and only that should have been the one and only one.

prescribed for all eternity: for this position - which, it seems, is unknown in any other culture in the world, or is only considered insignificant or curious - is in reality "one of the least effective positions that men have ever been able to devise" (1226).

On the stagnation of laws

Even today, when psychology and medicine (though probably not for a long time) consider any kind of intercourse normal, as well as oral-genital contact and masturbation, not a few jurisdictions still extend the concept of dishonesty to married couples, which we undoubtedly owe to the churches. In some US states the penalties for such conduct in Kinsey's time remain so horrendous that they are exceeded only by those for rape, child abduction and murder. "We know of cases where a person was convicted at the demand of his or her spouse or because someone found out that oral or anal sex play was taking place within the marriage. It is true that there are few criminal prosecutions based on these laws, but as long as these laws exist they will be subject to zealous and strict interpretation and will serve as a pretext for blackmailers".

... And of the progress of morality

Eventually, the priests reluctantly gave in, as the world had not yet emerged from the orbit of vice and, worse still, did not even seem that vicious any more.

True, the Church had declared in late antiquity that sexuality was derived from God but sexual excitement was the result of original sin, and although in the Middle Ages it had come to defend that pleasure was derived from God, the "disorder of desire and pleasure" was described as the "fault of the first parents" and as a personal "debt". Gradually, , it came to allow some enjoyment in relationships.

sexual intercourse. Later, in addition to sexual intercourse for pleasure, sexual intercourse for pleasure was also authorised and was only labelled sinful if it was done for pleasure alone. Theologians of our century may think they are very progressive because, in an age in which love has become an important factor in choice of a partner and is hardly ever renounced, even after a failed marriage, they no longer openly oppose the physical act; because they mask their traditional anti-sexual spirit by stressing the personal significance of marriage and the equality of women in the couple. But they do so not because they are suddenly infused with better ideas or more humane, but simply because the change in trend has already gone too far and, as always in similar cases, adaptation is imperative. So they appear more indulgent, more generous and wiser, making complicit jibes at the moral theology of times past, and immediately revert to limiting their own concessions - one quarter joviality and three quarters malice - so that little more than the blindfold remains on the eyes of the unwary.

The "dark compulsion of the sexual

In concrete terms, this is how it works:

First of all, it is generously tolerated that married couples "seek and enjoy the pleasure that the Creator has destined for them", because no one wants to speak out against the Creator, not even the Pope, at least not directly. But then the Holy Father drastically reduces the generosity he has just shown and orders that "the spouses should keep within the limits of just moderation", that "in sexual enjoyment they should not give themselves unrestrainedly to the impulse of the senses" because "although the substance of the act remains intact, it is possible to sin in the way it is performed".

The Dutch Catechism says that the erotic is "good". And it does not stop there. For this would still be "too weakly expressed. It is holy.

Eroticism is a holy and creative power within us". Ciare that only one line after this rhetorical phrase whose brazenness already makes it

If erotic attraction is detached from the system of other human values and, above all, if its bodily facet, physical sexuality, is detached from the system of human eroticism, unsuspected abysses of evil and brutality can open up (...)."

Today, married couples are allowed to indulge in pleasure through the idea of a "sexuality willed by God". But these ideas, it warns, are, under certain circumstances, completely "useless and dangerous". Certainly, sexual pleasure is sanctified by the sacrament of marriage and as such is good. But when pleasure is "sought for its own sake", when it is "yielded to without restraint" it is "the source of unspeakable degenerations, passions and sins".

A certain moralist who, out of progressivism, in addition to frankly acknowledging that marriage is "no bargain" goes so far as to demand that the act "should only take place under optimal conditions of bodily and spiritual vigour and energy" (which certainly implies new and remarkable restrictions!), then complains, as soon as his progressivism lets him recover, of the "dark compulsion of the sexual and the uncontrollability of the erotic", of "the inherent tendency of eroticism to break with the established and become dangerous and even destructive", or of the "inherent tendency of eroticism to break with the established and to become dangerous and even destructive", or of the

"omnipresent sexualism". And although, for the sake of scientific conventions (which the experts on God need more than anyone else), he finds subtle differences in marriage between *causa efficiens*, *causa formalis* and *causa finalis*, or between *amor complacentiae*, *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor benevolentiae*, or between "corporeality" and "corporeity", the "obscure compulsion" (not of the sexual but of the theological) leads, as always, into the old dead end: "The union and interpenetration of sexual, erotic and personal love requires, among Christians, a conformation through Christian love: agape. Sexus, Eros and Love can never emerge from a lukewarm to-and-fro between genuine self-giving and selfish satisfaction if they are not agape-qualified to become the pure form of love. Agape is love born of God". "The ontologically interior refers to the integration in the ontologically interior.

superior. Sexus and Eros always need (...). ...to moral theologians; you know (and vice versa!) ^[227].

Coitus catholicus: "noble and chaste".

The case of a Catholic theologian of fifty years ago for whom sexual gratification was only licit "if the instincts were mastered"; conjugal love had to stand "on the basis of chastity" and married people were forbidden to live "as adulterers" is not a mere memory. Was not that time - which means, after no less than nineteen hundred years of Christianity - the last in which it was possible to write (with ecclesiastical licence): "A mother who is ever joined to her husband like a venal prostitute to her libertine lover" will pass on

The "seed of evil in her child" and through his blood will run "the inclination to sin (...) instead of the sense of the sublime and noble, of the pure and good". Nor is it only in the popular literature of the Church today that "all that excess of sensual pleasure which offends against the sense of modesty" is still affirmed as sin, expecting "the holy and pure woman (...)" to trample underfoot "the serpent of concupiscence", who

"In the depths" she remains "virgin, that is, the property of Christ"; that is to say, she must remain subject, as in the Middle Ages, to a Church which condemns pleasure. It is not only in the popular religious literature of the present day that "the quiet of the night" is recommended for sexual contacts (as for all dark undertakings), approving them only in those positions which "above all, look after the comfort of the woman and do not forget the respect due to her", i.e. respect for the despotism of the Church.

No; today's 'serious' moral theology - in its elaboration of a The "ecclesiological perspective" - would also want sexual intercourse to entail "a respectful availability for the fulfilment of the reproductive mission", to be "totally respectful, noble and chaste", to spiritualise everything.

"to an authentically human level", reaching "the character of a supernatural, holy and constantly sanctifying action". Marriage

must be a "holy order", a "means of salvation", a "ministry", a "ministry", a "ministry".

permanent service to Christ"; husbands and wives have to become "permanent service to Christ".

"mutual instrument of sanctification", in "Corpus Christi mysticum", in

"They must look at each other "with their eyes constantly fixed on God", they must make their "likeness to God" effective day by day and turn their "mutual support" into "participation in the work of salvation" and so on.

Mental weakness instead of sex

In this way, love between man and woman is banished to the aseptic nightmare of Christian heaven, to the disembodied and de-erotised Nothingness; it is distanced from the libido under a barrage of sermons as infatuated as they are meaningless, and sexual experience, instead of being sanctified by the sacrament of marriage, is repressed by it. Under these conditions, total surrender to one's partner is impossible, and this has provoked serious crises of conscience in countless people, driving them to renunciation, hysteria or neurosis and, on quite a few occasions, destroying them.

But all this typical guild moral chatter basically boils down to this: the minimum of sexuality and the maximum of submission! It has always been like that. It needs no further comment that, in a motu-proprio on mixed marriage of 31 March 1970, at a time when his servants were beginning to discover and proclaim the personal dignity of women, the Pope used the term "law" almost forty times,

"right", "rule", "duty" and "obedience" and not once the word "right", "rule", "duty" and "obedience".

"love". Or to openly praise "the excellent sexual ethics of the Middle Ages" and to preach unambiguously that the dignity of women

"can only be preserved" by a return to biblical revelation ⁽¹²²⁸⁾.

The Knights in Black

The old principle of hostility to pleasure is hidden in a crude theological trap that even the most naive should have discovered: in the clergy's indefatigable concern for women's bodily well-being.

There is hardly a single work of moral theology (of the past) in which the religious do not present themselves as sensitive guardians and noble (or perhaps not so disinterested?) protectors of the woman harassed by the lustful husband, of that being whom they have always hated, demeaned... and used sexually. But despite the transparency of their intentions, the old appeal is still effective in the 20th century in all those places (and where not!) where Christian husbands are taught to control "their own instincts, perhaps fiery", so that they "never infringe on loving discretion", or whenever "a dignified expression of marital relations" is advocated, for sexual encounters full of "love and respect", or "spiritualised love", for copulation without "love and respect", or "spiritualised love", for a copulation without "love and respect", or "spiritualised love".

"learned patterns", no "refined lovemaking techniques" and no "orgasm" - He proposes a "respectful love and modest love" and a lot of "consideration", "discretion" and "tenderness". And the fact is that "truly tender spouses can more easily renounce the full marital union and the pleasure that goes with it (...)" ; thus, in the end, all the cards are laid on the clerical table.

The protective aura of the religious eventually leads to this point. When they celebrate the sanctity and sacramental consecration of marriage as "the most exalted" they reveal, in fact, what women owe to Christianity; the less sexuality the better! "In this kind of marriage, permeated by the breath of the Supernatural, the woman need not worry about her dignity. The husband guards the paradise of her femininity like a cherub with his refulgent sword". Which again settles the question stylistically. The good Catholic expects "purity to invest his wife's being with an invisible majesty" and to place "on her head a royal crown" (texts with ecclesiastical licence). And Adam's rib, good and catholic, expects her lord to "dominate her senses". She

will not love an "unbridled" skull; he will despise him and must even detest him (!). "How rich are the possibilities for Christian spouses to honour Christ in intimacy" [229].

On the sensual cost of living

It is quite understandable, therefore, that in many Catholic marriages, and precisely in the sexual sphere, it seems that it is discomfort and not pleasure that rules. May young Catholics today remember that "for my mother, virginity was the highest ideal. That is why she only saw marriage as a necessary evil (an attitude that refers exclusively to the sexual side of marriage)". Quite a biblical ideal: faithfulness to the line of St. Paul! Another testimony: "Mother was a silent woman, full of trust in God. However, my parents approached sex with a negative attitude, especially my mother. Corporeality was part of the marriage contract, but pleasure was a sin, in line with church morals.

Many theologians, in order to repress the diabolical pleasure, tirelessly warned of the consequences of debauchery. Time and again - and not only in the dark Middle Ages - they frightened people by prophesying the birth of leprous, epileptic or crippled children. In the 20th century they still threaten with the convincing power of a jungle sorcerer:

"When the man lacks the energy of chastity and self-control, the wife has to pay the cost of an uncontrolled sensual life, which results in serious nervous and gynaecological ailments, as well as weakened, deformed and often half-idiotic offspring". In addition to stating, in the middle of the 20th century, that premarital relations lead to "sexual neurasthenia and nervous diseases" and in the most serious cases result in sterility, they report how a certain doctor found "in two thousand patients" that "marital abuse" was the cause of inflammation, "regardless of the methods used". "Cancer is also often caused by the mechanical stimulation of condoms".

An almost unlimited orgasmic capacity...

The concern shown by the clergy for the "gates of Hell, always open" is all the more curious because, as the best-founded research suggests, women have an extraordinary sexual potential and a capacity for sexuality far greater than that of men. "If a woman capable of reaching a normal orgasm is properly stimulated, in many cases she can have up to six climaxes after the first before she is truly satisfied. Unlike men, who can usually only have one orgasm in a short space of time, many women can have five or six orgasms in the space of a few minutes, especially if the clitoris continues to be stimulated".

And a rather suspicious frigidity

However, the constant insinuation of sexual guilt feelings and nonsense - even held by doctors, but inspired by religion - has been a source of concern. - The psychological balance of the couple was necessarily compromised by the notion that women could not and should not derive erotic satisfaction, or that they were tainted by being attributed with such sensations. It seems clear that, for centuries, the female instincts have been enervated; in a world that allowed men concubines, mistresses and prostitutes, while the sexual life of the wife was being consumed, female sexuality was drastically deformed and weakened, and European women suffered a kind of psychological atrophy, losing faculties that women in other cultures still had.

This is the only way to understand that, although women have an almost unlimited orgasmic capacity (with electrical stimulation, between twenty and fifty times in an hour), in the 1930s - according to a report by the British sexologist and sociologist Alex Comfort - one in three patients in the gynaecological department of a London hospital had not yet experienced an orgasm in the course of their married life; or that, around the same time, according to Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich, 90% of women who had had an orgasm in their marital life had never experienced one.

In 1963, according to a survey on the intimate life of West Germans, only 35% of women (compared to 66% of men) considered "intimate relations" necessary, while 52% of the female population could do without them (compared to only 22% of men); and even more: according to reliable estimates, frigidity still affects no less than 40% of women today. And although this often has individual, specifically biographical causes, the impact of collective factors is even more devastating, above all, as Josef Rattner stresses, that of the "primitive religious conviction that sensuality is a sin (...); we are still weighed down by an age-old tradition that has hammered us with such absurdity".

It is estimated that there are still thousands of married couples in the United States who lack a sex life. One researcher tracked down several dozen married women who said they did not know how to have intercourse. And some marriage counsellors claim to have met couples who did not even suspect that it is a normal practice ^[230].

Popular... for Christ's sake?

Who can be surprised that, as the French writer Menie Grégoire writes, "sexual initiation poses such difficulties for Christians that they visit the psychiatrist more and more frequently, driven by an insurmountable fear of what represents the very essence of life"?

Who can be surprised that, according to Kinsey's voluminous surveys, strict Catholics reach their first orgasm six to seven years later than non-practising Catholics? Or that 21% of strict Catholics surveyed by Kinsey experienced their first orgasm at the age of thirty-five, even though most were married and had regular sex? Who can be surprised that today's psychotherapists meet "women with a relatively strict Catholic upbringing who have never been able and will never be able to reach orgasm" and who see it as completely natural that sexual intercourse should only ever be achieved in the first place?

Or that there are young women who were "committed to asylums when they discovered on their wedding night what their husbands really intended to do"?

And , in France and Belgium, as in the Middle Ages, there again talk of an "order of marriage" (*ordre du mariage*): the entry of both spouses into an "intermediate order" or into a house of Oblates! And why not? In 1973, a Catholic complains about the limitation still given to sexual relations within marriage: "If Catholic spouses obey the encyclical of the present Bishop of Rome, they will have very few days left for their sexual life" ^[231].

To sum it up briefly: although, on the one hand, the Church has put obstacles in the way of marriage, creating an irritating number of days of compulsory marital chastity and, on top of that, trying to spice up pleasure at every opportunity, as befits its characteristic logic, the religion of love does not tolerate any extra-marital relations, let alone divorce.

6. ADULTERY

It is often the first link in a long chain of crime. If a person has dared to take this first step (...) no barrier will stop him on the slope of crime.

J. RIES, theologian; with ecclesiastical licence!

Moral theology has included adultery - differentiating between single and double adultery, depending on whether one or both lovers are married - among the most serious crimes until almost the present day.

In ancient times, various African churches used to punish adulterers with lifelong penance and final expulsion. In the early centuries of the Middle Ages, five years of penance for each adultery (a notorious attempt was sufficient) was the norm in the Church if the

However, if both spouses had agreed, the penalty was increased to ten years.

Atonement consisted, among other things, in surviving for years on bread and water, in banishments and long pilgrimages - above all to Rome, to supposed tombs of the apostles - during which, in order to harden the punishment, the penitents were placed in iron rings around their necks, hands and legs, rings which, it was believed - so much did they trust in God - would break of their own accord when the penance was sufficient. Every Sunday, and later four times a year, evildoers were condemned and paraded naked through the streets while receiving countless lashes. According to a resolution of the synod of Nablus (1120), the adulterer was castrated and the adulteress lost her nose, and sometimes it was the culprit himself who had to carry out the sentence on his accomplice. And in the 14th century, at a time when clerics had the almost exclusive right to punish adulteries, a husband who caught his wife and her lover *in fragranti* could kill them immediately, imposing a simple religious penance.

Death penalty, according to secular law

The emperor Constantine already equated adultery with murder, even denying convicts the right of appeal. His son Constantius had adulterers eliminated in the same way as patricides, i.e. by throwing them into the sea in a closed sack with a snake, a monkey, a cockerel and a dog or, if the sea was too far away, by sending them to the stake.

Things did not ease up over time. The Saxon and Swabian codes punished adultery by both parties with death. Some municipal laws condemned lovers to be beheaded or buried alive, the latter especially for the wife, if the husband was not satisfied with any other punishment. In Berlin and among the Dithmarschen peasantry, the husband could mutilate his wife and the seducer could be killed.

or set them free, at his complete discretion. Around 1630, the Elector Maximilian fixed for adultery offences a banishment of between five and seven years, but in case of recidivism, the culprits were to be handed over to the executioner. And in the mid-18th century, the *Codex Maximilianeus Bavaricus Criminalis* still allowed nobles to lock up their unfaithful wives - provided they had confessed to third parties - in their castles "or in other suitable places, keeping them in such prison under custody until the time of their death" [232].

It was not until the Enlightenment that adultery was judged less severely, and yet in the Federal Republic of the 1960s, governed by the CDU/CSU coalition, a "reform" of the penal code came close to reintroducing the crime - today it is decriminalised - punishable by one year in prison, as opposed to six months in the Guillermo era.

"(...) The adultery of a woman is more serious".

A feature of adultery prosecutions is that women have often been punished much more severely, which has been largely due to the action of the Church.

In ancient times, if a Christian's wife committed adultery, he had to repudiate her. Religious were obliged to do so under threat of suspension or definitive excommunication. On the other hand, the wife had to receive her husband back if he returned home repentant. What's more, the early Church punished a man's adultery with seven years of penance and a woman's adultery with fifteen!

There are many examples of this tendency being maintained in the secular law of the early Middle Ages. This is the case of the *Lex Baiuvariorum* (743) - drafted by a cleric and steeped in religious ideas - which made marital fidelity the exclusive affair of the woman. The man, on the other hand, had the right to kill his lover (and probably usually did so), though presumably, in the same rage, he usually killed his wife as well. According to the Ordinances of Prosecution

In the Penal Code of the Upper Palatinate (1606), "both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be sentenced to death by sword or by water", although the man's infidelity was only punished if his mistress was married, which was still the thinking of the Jews in the time of Christ. In Napoleon's Code, adultery continued to be a crime, but only if committed by the wife. In that case, the husband could lock her up and separate from her, and could even kill her if he caught her in the act, while the man living in concubinage was sentenced, in the worst case, to a monetary penalty.

The moral theology of the 20th century still believes that "adultery of a woman is more serious". The misogynistic influence of the Church is so great that until recently Italian and Spanish law only punished the adulterous wife and her lover, but not the adulterous husband. The commander could only be punished for concubinage. On the other hand, until 1968, the unfaithful wife in Italy risked a year in prison.

However, judging by abundant statistical estimates and contrary to the usual Church propaganda, 70% of married women's adulteries, instead of causing them serious difficulties, result in a favourable change of course in the marriage ⁽¹²³³⁾.

7. DIVORCE

Although, according to Mark and Luke, Jesus strictly forbade divorce, according to Matthew he authorised it on different occasions, in the event of "fornication" (*porneia*) of the wife. St. Paul also admits divorce, although on different grounds, i.e. if in a mixed marriage it is claimed by the pagan spouse. Catholicism recognises this *privilegium paulinum* as an exceptional situation; after such a divorce for reasons of faith even a new marriage with a Christian spouse is licit: the so-called *privilegium petrinum*.

Another possible dispensation (based on the distinction between *matrimonium ratum* and *consummatum*) exists for marriages contracted with full validity but not physically consummated: a rare case, of course. And, finally, canon law also authorises the

The "separation of table and bed" which, however, prevents both parties from remarrying, i.e. it does not annul the union.

In any case, every marriage celebrated between baptised persons and consummated by *copula carnalis* is considered by the Church to be indissoluble. Divorce is therefore not authorised even if the act has only taken place once: because the husband has become impotent immediately after the wedding night as a result of an accident, for example. "In such a case, neither the reproductive purpose of marriage, the highest good of sexual theology, nor the danger of the unsatisfied wife being driven into a sinful extra-marital relationship, count for anything".

According to canon law, a civil divorce also cannot serve as a basis for a new marriage. Since the first marriage continues, a remarriage would be an adulterous relationship. So, according to this view, a man who marries after separation commits bigamy and lives with his second wife in adultery and concubinage, ergo, as someone recently remarked sarcastically, "adultery cubed".

A "more ductile praxis" in "concrete pastoral doctrine".

Of course, these rules have not always been in force; reality has disproved them, and in practice people have been much more "ductile" and "flexible" than in practice.

"flexible". And since the Gospel itself made contradictory proclamations and both Roman and Germanic law authorised (frequent) divorces, the Catholic Church gradually set in motion a powerful mechanism of dispensations. If in the 2nd century indissolubility was still interpreted strictly, it became more tolerant in the 3rd century, so that in the 4th and 5th centuries only two Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine and St. Jerome, are known to prohibit divorce and remarriage in case of adultery. The penitentials of the early Middle Ages also allow the deceived husband to

The same was true of a woman who could only leave her unfaithful husband if she entered a convent.

However, in addition to adultery, there were other grounds for divorce which sometimes opened the door to a new liaison: prosecution, capture of the husband or wife by the enemy, sterility, malicious abandonment, leprosy and others. Significantly, the Church also allowed divorce if one of the spouses had ceased to be "suitable to rank": an obvious concession to Germanic thinking ^[234].

Repudiate wife with ecclesiastical blessing

The simplest way to dissolve a marriage was by consanguinity. Once discovered, the clergy considered the marriage as if it had not taken place. Since the prohibition of consanguineous marriage extended up to the seventh degree, and since many, if not most, noble families in the Middle Ages were in fact consanguineous, such marriages could be annulled at any time: which was all the more important for men, since frequent marriages increased their wealth. So many women were repudiated four and five times with ecclesiastical blessing. In any case, this did not prevent men from liquidating their wives, as was often the case as a result of indissolubility.

-He would then accuse them of adultery in order to justify the act.

On the other hand, the clergy did not hesitate to make frequent concessions to the powerful. For example, when Emperor Lotarius' son Lotarius II (855-869) wanted to leave his wife Teutberga and marry his mistress Waldrada, the synods meekly approved the divorce and remarriage. And although Pope Nicholas I objected, his successor Hadrian II lifted the anathema against Waldrada and gave Lotarius communion at Monte Cassino.

The Church, compromised with the princes, went so far as to polygamy, especially that of the Merovingians and Carolingians.

King Clotarius I married six times and on one of these occasions he married his sisters Ingunda and Aregunda at the same time. Something similar happened with his son Carbert. Dagobert I, a king much loved by the clergy (and who had thousands of Bulgarian families who had fled from the Huns under his protection murdered in one night), had three wives and countless barraganas; Pipin II had two legitimate wives, Plectrudis and Alpais. And Charlemagne, who was declared a saint by Paschal III (antipope under Alexander III) on 29 December 1165, lived with concubines until his death after five marriages - his third wife, Hildegard of Swabia, was only thirteen when they married and became pregnant at fourteen - yet he had "harlots" savagely flogged in marketplaces. The Church tolerated concubinage well into the Middle Ages, although it was not compatible with marriage.

On some misrepresentations about the indissolubility of marriage

In the mid-ninth century, pseudo-Isidorian forgeries - which provided the papacy with services as important as they were numerous - helped to promote the indissolubility of marriage. The prohibition of divorce and monogamy were confused in Catholicism from the tenth and eleventh centuries (the Lateran Council dates from 1215); the former was strongly reaffirmed by the Council of Trent although, with a view to an eventual union with the Greek Orthodox, it was not expressly defined from a dogmatic point of view.

The indissolubility of marriage was undoubtedly a certain guarantee for the woman who, more often than not, bore the brunt of separations. In any case, this guarantee, for which not a few women became Christians, was the only benefit that the new religion granted them.

As was to be expected, the Pope reserved the right to authorise separations. And this right, recognised by all the princes, made it possible for the Pope to

often all triumphs in the hands of the Curia.

When, at the end of the 15th century, Louis XII wanted to dissolve his marriage to marry the Duchess of Brittany, Rome drew up the corresponding capitulations to please the monarch. But shortly afterwards, when Henry VIII wanted to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn, one of the ladies of his court, the Vatican refused, even though Henry VIII was a faithful son of the Church and a staunch antagonist of the Reformation. But Boleyn came from the lower English nobility, and Catherine of Aragon belonged to the most powerful dynasty in the world; she was also the aunt of Charles V, whom the Pope desperately needed to combat the reformers ^[235].

The divorce between the Lutherans and the Orthodox

Among Protestants, the right to divorce existed from the very beginning. The most generous opinion was that of Melanchthon; Luther, however, limited the grounds for divorce to adultery and wilful desertion of the home, although only in the last stage. In time, however, the following were also recognised as sufficient grounds for dissolution of the union: continued refusal to fulfil the conjugal duty, imprisonment of one of the spouses, physical threats, incompatibility of character, sterility of the wife, impotence of the husband, incurable diseases, insanity, onanism, alcoholism, profligacy, and others. However, from the Protestant point of view, one cannot dissolve one's marriage without making oneself guilty in the eyes of God.

The Greek Orthodox Church, which has always recognised the possibility of separation for adultery, continues to grant it today in extreme cases, relying on the doctrine of some ancient doctors of the Church. The Melkite patriarch Elie Zoghby (Egypt) defended the same position at the Second Vatican Council, albeit to the general perplexity of those present.

Catholic progress

But even within the Catholic Church some are beginning to think - timidly and, of course, more out of love for the famous clerical "progress" than out of humanity - about making the best of the new situation.

The situation has changed radically in this respect as well. Indissolubility, once a real protection for women as submissive slaves to the clergy, is today more of an obstacle for them. At least in West Germany, most divorce petitions no longer come from husbands, and Catholics themselves wonder "why it is precisely women and young girls who speak out so vehemently against indissolubility". And while the papacy firmly fights the introduction of divorce in Italy, while Cardinal Garrone considers it a "step backwards" and a "wrong path", the "progressives" have discovered in Jesus "a certain understanding towards divorce"... and also in his followers! "However, it can be admitted that some convinced Catholics also accept divorce in certain circumstances and as a last resort". That is: them... not Jesus!

This opportunistic adaptation is the only reason for the new attitude towards children born out of wedlock, whom the Church has always treated with the utmost contempt,

8. CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK

Natural children were not considered dishonourable by either the Greeks or the Germans; on the other hand, young Christian "sinful" girls were punished with public penances and infamous punishments until the 18th century, and in northern they were still being flogged in the early 19th century.

Disenfranchised and disinherited

But above all, due to the growing influence of the Church, the son had to suffer the punishment for his mother's "crime" for the rest of his life. In Germany in the middle centuries of the Middle Ages, natural children could only claim certain rights of support from their father. In the Saxon code they are one of the "disenfranchised" groups: excluded from all privileges, unable to be judges, jurors, witnesses or guardians, and unable even to obtain a guardian to represent their interests in court. In England they were also seriously disadvantaged "at the instigation of the Church": neither father nor mother could recognise them, they were basically *outlaws*, *filius nullius* in the legal sense, children of nobody.

Many, if not most, codes considered a child to be a bastard (not related to either the father or the mother) who, although born in wedlock, had been conceived earlier, or where the parents had not married until after the birth (!) And since a bastard child could not inherit from his parents, the parents had no rights to the child's property. His estate went to the Treasury. A register of bastardy cases in the Upper Palatinate gave the state the right to confiscate the entire inheritance of natural children. Many were affected by such laws. In most parts of Catholic Bavaria there were still more than 20% illegitimate births in the course of the 19th century, and slightly more than 30% in a city like Nuremberg^[236].

The usual exceptions

However, provided he was paid enough, the Church could overlook the birthmark of certain prominent bastards. Thus, in 1247, Innocent IV amended the exclusion of the bastard Hagen Hagensen from the succession to the Norwegian throne, receiving fifteen thousand silver marks for it. Likewise, the "expert cardinal" William of Sabina,

(At the same time as legitimising the bastard king, the Curia was busy disenfranchising the legitimate children of priests. And the children of a civilly married religious are still bastards today, according to canon law).

The Church gave the children of consanguineous marriages (deformed, crippled and crippled, according to her) the same treatment as bastards, depriving them of all their civil rights when it was possible to do so. Of course, these children could also be rehabilitated in exchange for a sufficient amount of gold and coins... as long as a greater benefit (*major utilitas*, in her jargon) did not impose a harsh stance on Mother Church.

They are still discriminated against today

Discrimination against children born out of wedlock - treated as "children of sin" - is still evident today. For example, in the 20th century, the religious code still excludes bastards from the cardinalate, episcopate and prelature. In many European states, children conceived out of wedlock are still not recognised even in the case of a subsequent marriage, thus expressly accepting a provision of canon law. In our days, a German territorial court refused to declare legitimacy in one of these cases (referring to Dutch law) specifically invoking the ecclesiastical prescriptions of the 13th century!

It was not until 1 July 1970 that bastard children (now called "unmarried children") lost any de jure ominous connotations in the Federal Republic. In practice, however, they are still disadvantaged from birth: the number of stillborn children is one and a half times higher among them than among children born in wedlock. According to surveys on the status of women, the psychological pressure on a single mother (and with her, indirectly, the child) in the Federal Republic is enormous, because single mothers have a

The reputation of these countries is low, even when they are coping exemplarily with their plight.

Of course, even the servants of the Religion of Love are beginning to discover, after almost two thousand years, that the "innocent being", the child born out of wedlock, also has rights that do not lapse because of the "sin of his parents" and that the "pastoral behaviour" towards the unwed mother must be subjected to "a fundamental revision".

Because of tolerance? because of humanity? because of justice? No, not at all! Because "social circumstances have changed radically" [\[237\]](#).

CHAPTER 21

THE PROHIBITION OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

Why is the advertising of contraceptives not liberalised? Why are schoolchildren not widely educated about contraception? Why are vending machines for different contraceptives not installed everywhere and easily accessible? All this could have happened a long time ago without major headaches for our ministers of health, finance and labour, because it costs nothing (...)

CHRISTA BECKER

The person of legal age (...) thinks and acts in such a way that he is always in a position to bear the responsibility for his own actions (...) He thinks, above all, that begetting children must be the most responsible action of a person. For he who begets children who cannot be happy commits the greatest crime imaginable.

DEMOSTHENES SAVRAMIS

The Church does not judge the "pill"; rather it is the "pill" puts the Church in the dock, from the point of view of fundamental human needs.

ALEX COMFORT^[238]

Pygmies, Bushmen and Catholics

Conscious birth control or family planning is not a novel aspect of modern "degeneration", but is a phenomenon of ancient origin spread throughout the earth - an integral part human life itself. Primitive hunters and gatherers, such as the Pygmies and Bushmen (and certain Catholics), are the only groups that tend to forgo contraception; or do without it altogether, as seems to be the case with the natives of Tierra del Fuego.

The oldest - and certainly the most common - contraceptive procedure must have been coitus interruptus, which already appears in the Old Testament. However, four thousand years ago, Egyptian women were already applying intravaginal balls of wool and cloth impregnated with certain extracts. The use of condoms made from fish or animal guts, the ingestion of vegetable products and even abstinence during a certain period of the menstrual cycle are also very ancient, practices already described at the beginning of the 2nd century by the Greek Soranus of Ephesus, one of the most important gynaecologists of antiquity, who settled in Rome. Christianity seems to have ignored the vast majority of contraceptive methods... until the 18th century! The rule in this part of the world was to marry early and produce as many offspring as possible (supra).

Although Jesus' teaching on the purpose of marriage is non-existent, and there is not a word about birth control in the entire New Testament, the Church has forbidden the use of any means of contraception, no matter how simple. The most widely used of them all, the "walking off" or "reversal" - which, according to St. Augustine, degraded women to the status of prostitutes - has been regarded to this as gravely sinful. (Even today the Church still threatens the "devastating effects" of this practice centred "on the unleashing of pleasure").

Naturally, the prohibition is, in the first place, at the service of multiplying the number of parishioners and clerical cadres (supra). But it is also the expression of sexual envy and spiritual malice.

which can be seen in a papal brief of 1826 which condemns the use of condoms "because it hinders the designs of Providence, who wished to punish creatures by means of the member with which they sin": that is, for example, by means of syphilis, which was then incurable ^[239]. (By the way: what a Providence, which is left with a condom!)

The scourge of God and the "English hood".

The Church did not see syphilis as a disease, but as a plague from God, a consequence of the sin of lust and, above all, of sodomy. In the Middle Ages, victims of sexual diseases, "dissolute and depraved harlots", were condemned to wear yellow robes called "canary dresses", a sufficiently striking sign of their abjection. In the 19th century, diseases of this kind were still considered sinful and degrading in the extreme. They had to be kept secret at all costs; the word "venereal" could not even be written. And apparently, today, sexually transmitted diseases still often provoke hatred from those around them, including threats of strikes in some factories ("They must be locked up", "kick them out", "they are morally reprehensible"...).

These things are the result of a morality whose apostles have always forbidden sexual prophylaxis. In the mid-19th century, at a time when doctors themselves were being locked up in prison for recommending contraception, the Vatican decreed that "to avail oneself of such a fund is a grave fault; it is a mortal sin". And to the question: "Should a woman indulge in coitus if she knows that her husband encircles his member with an 'English hood'?", the Pope and the College of Cardinals answered in the mid-19th century: "No, for she would be an accomplice to an abominable crime (!) and would commit a mortal sin".

The "infamous articles" of 1913...

In the late 19th century, birth control was widespread in Europe, with clergy from Spain to Germany attacking "marital abuse", "unnatural sexual relations", or the "renunciation of the blessing of children".

An instruction given by the Belgian bishops in 1909 "marital onanism" - "the perverse sin of Onan committed in Belgium by rich and poor, citizens and peasants" - instructs confessors as follows: "If someone practices contraception for fear of bringing more children into the world than he can feed, he should be encouraged to put more trust in Providence, which will see to it that none die of hunger. If a man practises contraception for fear that pregnancy and childbirth will endanger his wife, his fears should be assuaged. But if there is real danger, heroic chastity is to be recommended. Publicly, priests were to confront sin by praising the large family, but in the confessional they were to "combat evil with particular firmness".

Shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, the German bishops condemned all forms of preventing reproduction; alleged abuses of marriage "for pure pleasure" would be "grave, very grave sins (...) There can be no need so pressing, no profit so great, no instinct so invincible as to justify such a violation of God's natural moral law (!)".

Even the industry was condemned by the pastoralists as "nefarious" because of their "criminal complicity", since "our poor German people" would have to "pay for their infamous articles not only with their money, but also with their blood, with the health of body and soul and with happiness of the family" ^[240]; although it is obvious that the one who pays with money, happiness and health is the one who disdains the methods of prevention!

... And the "Holy" War

Would the Church have fought the arms industry with this energy? Would it have occurred to you to label it "criminal" and "nefarious"? Because the words of the bishops in 1913 would have been appropriate for these "articles": "our poor German people must pay for them not only with their money, but also with their blood (...)". But the bishops were not talking about grenades, cannons and gas. No: they were talking about condoms. They justified grenades, cannons and genocide; They qualified them as saints! Condoms, on the other hand, were the work of the devil, and still are. For they decimate the consumers and those who are destined to be consumed, the users and those who are cannon fodder; they decimate power and glory. So war on condoms! But never war on war! This is the morality of the Church; everything else, words. That is why what the bishops did not say about cannons and grenades, but about prophylactics, applies to the bishops themselves: the people have to pay for them with their money and their blood... As history proves: from the wars of Constantine, through the butcheries of the Merovingians and Carolingians, the crusades in North, South, East and West, the massacres of Huguenots, heretics, witches and Jews and the great religious massacres of the 17th century, to the two world wars and the bloodbath in Vietnam.

This Church calls genocide divine worship! But medical professionals are forbidden to distribute contraceptives: better to catch gonorrhoea or syphilis. After the First World War, in the following sentence shone brightly in the "sanctuaries" of Catholicism: "However much the war may have played a part in the brutalisation of post-war manners, it is astonishing that the military commanders themselves put prophylactic means into the hands of the young, thus supplying them with unrestricted "brothel articles"". Kurt Tucholsky's timely reply: "So, Catholics killing human beings is fine. But if those in charge (...) worry - and they worry very little - that no more people will catch the clap (...) that's what they do

that could endanger Catholic dogmas. A very curious love, Christian love".

On Christian decorum and law

The mere sale of contraceptives "is a formal participation in the sin of the purchaser". Not the sale of grenades! This is the morality of the Church; its concept of good and evil, of conscience and amorality. "For example, it goes against a correct idea of conscience for the state, in the name of freedom of conscience, to tolerate harmful literature, contraceptive means and even abortion. The state must guarantee the freedom of the good and healthy conscience, but not the free development of the bad conscience. Otherwise, it would be inevitable that the bad would eventually prevail over the good".

In this way, the coercion of the "good guys" was imposed on the "bad guys": and , contraception is still being fought with the help of the "For example, while the Swedes and the Danes facilitate access to contraception for young people and place weekly advertisements on television, in other countries advertisements are punishable by fines and prison sentences; in the second half of this century, doctors have been prosecuted (in Italy, in Germany) for sterilising women or simply for recommending contraception. In contrast, in (non-Christian) India, adults who allow themselves to be sterilised are rewarded, and in Japan (another non-Christian country) a catastrophe has been averted in the last twenty years by carrying out some thirty million legal abortions. Throughout the Western world, including America, laws concerning sexual behaviour have to this day been derived from Christian morality ^[241].

On the "husband and wife attack".

In 1930, Pius XI, a decisive collaborator of Mussolini, Hitler and Franco, imparted in his encyclical *Casti connubii* ("On the Nobility and Dignity of Christian Marriage") the following doctrine: "But since the marriage act, by its very nature, is intended for the generation of new life, those who, in practising it, knowingly deprive it of its natural power, act against nature and do something reprehensible and immoral". At the same time, the Pope was - verbally - "very moved by the complaints of married couples who, oppressed by extreme poverty, hardly know how they will bring up their children". Yet, for all his shock, the "disastrous economic situation" cannot "serve as a motive for an even more disastrous error"!

For the Pope, everything that goes against the Curia's desire for domination - always presented as "divine" - is "sinful", "something reprehensible",

"immoral", "grave guilt". All those who "out of aversion to the blessing of children want to avoid the burden, but enjoy the pleasure", act, plainly and simply, as "criminals". And where would the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which lives off the burden it places on others, end up?

For this reason, Pius XII strongly propagated the same morality. "Any attempt by spouses", he said in 1951 before Italian matrons, "against the consummation of the marital act or against its natural consequences, with the purpose of stripping the marital act of its inherent force, preventing the generation of new life, is immoral". And he asserted: "this norm is fully valid today, was valid yesterday and will be valid tomorrow and always".

[illegible]

husband's "rape"!

And not only that: "a woman may not use contraception even in "self-defence", for example to protect herself against a man suffering from a sexual disease (...); who, by making the woman pregnant, would put her in obvious danger of death (!); who could only beget children with serious deficiencies (!); who would not take any care whatsoever for the feeding and education of her children". It is clear that these people do not shrink from anything.

When a woman ceases to be a woman

Above all, the most suggestible women continue to be coerced into avoiding any contraceptive practice. "If it is the man who resorts to them, the woman must offer him serious resistance, refuse and defend herself for as long and by whatever means she can; on all occasions, the woman must do everything possible to avoid this type of sexual intercourse and will only allow it forced by an act of real force which she cannot prevent even if she tries". "We want to live a Christian life; we have no right to commit excesses (!)". In this way, the wife must convince the husband who wants to prevent conception. In this way, under the pretext of responsibility, irresponsible coercion is used, the most serious sacrifices are demanded with obvious selfishness, and fear, discord and inhumanity are brought into families, marriages and the conjugal bedroom. In this way, what is reasonable is labelled as excess, what is an obvious obligation towards one's partner, children and society, and towards oneself, is branded as sin and crime.

At the same time, fear of contraception is provoked, presenting them as the cause of infections, even cancer, and spouting a whole pack of lies: "the whole circulatory system functions with difficulty; the nervous system, which should relax, collapses, and the man, instead of freeing himself from his instinct, is enslaved to it. But the woman ceases to be a woman from the spiritual point of view, she gives herself up to the

sensuality, her maternal condition is buried. Unconsciously, the soul is killed through the body".

And, since the consequence of emancipation from the sexual coercion of the Church is often freedom from the Church itself, married couples hear continuous and vehement calls for repentance: "even if they do not acknowledge it to each other, they will not get rid of the mute intimate feeling of being guilty before the living God (...) Therefore, it is understandable that they avoid looking God (!) in the eye and turn away from his way. They speak of the Church's interference in the private sphere. But, deep down, they know that it is not a question of interference by the Church, but of God and the divine order" ^[242].

The "beatification" of Knaus-Ogino

The use of the woman's non-fertile days or the Knaus-Ogino method was the only procedure that Pius XII accepted as morally justified and the only one for which he found "serious" reasons. The Pope thereby made a concession to the spirit of the times - leaving aside all tradition - but, on the other hand, and not without some consequence, he gave a free hand to the most unsafe procedure: the "natural" method, as he was careful to emphasise, to distinguish it from the "unnatural" or "unnatural" means. "artificial" repeatedly condemned.

But according to this logic, all of man's technical achievements that have made life more bearable, from spectacles to prostheses, from dentures to artificial organs, would be discredited. Moreover, one would have to ask whether, for many, "artificial" birth control is not more essentially natural than the daily measurement of basal temperature or the analysis of cervical mucus approved by the Pope.

In any case, any other preventive measure sinful and deeply immoral: from coitus interruptus to condoms, from weighing to the pill... whose production, curiously enough, was made possible by the previous work of a Catholic, the gynaecologist from

Harvard John Rock. An even greater irony considering that the discovery was the serendipitous result of his fertility research, the unintended consequence of experiments aimed, not at preventing, but at facilitating pregnancy (aren't God's ways inscrutable?).

The subsequent course of events was proverbial. On the one hand, in the history of pharmacy there has probably never been a preparation that has been so quickly popularised and achieved such good results: whereas the failure rate with condoms was almost 50%, with the Pill it dropped to less than 1%, thus eliminating the fear of pregnancy which until then had been the decisive reason for avoiding or limiting pre- and extra-marital sex. But on the other hand - and for precisely the same reason - an enormous panic was immediately unleashed. For even though in 1966 some of the most important scientific bodies in the world (expert commissions of the O. M.S.O. and British government expert commissions, US health authorities, and others) stressed - each for their part - the total harmlessness of the pill, they were blamed by many doctors - with a significant grimace of disapproval - upsetting the "order of creation"; the latter, with a "They warned of the dire consequences of inappropriate use: varicose veins, liver problems, anaemia or cancer... despite the fact that medicine believes that the pill probably inhibits cancerous processes, rather than promoting them.

On the inhumanity of "human life"...

At the Second Vatican Council, the Church maintained its anti-humanistic and anti-hedonistic line. The "fathers" still refused to , "In birth control, the children of the Church" would follow "paths that the Magisterium, in application of divine law, forbids". A Catholic comments that "whoever reads the conciliar text carefully will see that there is no free decision to have children or not to have them, or to have two, three or three children".

four. The marriage act must always involve a "will to reproduce".

In a talk he addressed to the cardinals in 1964, Paul VI had already "frankly" acknowledged: "We, for the time being, have no sufficient basis for considering that the norms decreed in this regard by Pius XII have been superseded and are no longer binding"; and he added an admonition that no one should express himself at that time "in a sense which deviates from the norms in force". In 1968, the "Encyclical on the Pill" (which, by the way, did not mention the Pill, although it dealt with it by extension) made it clear that, on this issue, things were business as usual. Only methods based on fertility cycles were allowed, a circumstance which Catholics themselves mocked: "the beatification of Knaus-Ogino, represented by the company of the asylum of St. Peter's in Rome, under the direction of Paul VI".

In addition, Paul VI also prohibited anything that sought to prevent reproduction, "preventively, during the performance of the act or after the act" and ordered that all sexual acts of the couple "should be aimed, per se, at the reproduction of human life", even if "honest and powerful reasons are being put forward for another way of proceeding". (Only if a nun is threatened with rape - which some may be vainly hoping for - can she use contraception with curial authorisation)!

The papal circular *Humanae vitae* - whose title is perhaps another display of celibate cynicism - maintains unchanged the theological-moral tradition of recent popes. It asserts divine right, invokes "above all the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, whose particular assistance pastors enjoy in expounding the truth" and, with equal boldness, does not hesitate to affirm that the doctrine (on love, marriage and birth control) "is in accord with human reason" ^[243].

... And on the burden of the Holy Spirit

Humanae vitae is based on several opinions of the papal commission on the issue of birth control: a majority opinion, a minority opinion and a majority reply to the minority opinion.

The ultra-conservative minority opinion, which was decisive in the drafting of the encyclical, speaks of the "evil of contraception", describing it as a grave and unnatural sin, a condemnable vice and "anticipatory homicide". The authors of the opinion - who did not hesitate to declare that "all believers" approved of their statements - argued convincingly that a modification of tradition would raise doubts about the history of the Church, the authority of the pastoral ministry in moral questions and even that of the Holy Spirit in such a case. The Holy Spirit would have been on the side of the Protestants in 1939 (Pius XI: encyclical *Casti connubii*), 1951 (Pius XII: address to midwives) and 1958 (Pius XII: address to the Society of Haematologists) and would not have prevented Pius XI, Pius XII and a large part of the hierarchy from error for half a century.

In fact, if it were to allow birth control, the Church would put itself in a difficult situation, it would literally condemn itself. For not only would it deny all that it had previously demanded - that is, the whole Catholic tradition - which would mean little to hierarchs who have always been slaves to expediency; nor would it affect the fate of the millions who, because of reproductive compulsion, have seen their marriages fail or sink permanently into poverty.

However, considering that a Catholic commits a mortal sin not only when he knows perfectly well that it is a grave fault, a *materia gravis*, but also when he believes that it is a mortal sin, even if it is not a mortal sin at all, it would be truly fatal for the shepherds of souls if the Church had condemned without remission so many believers; as stated in the document on birth control delivered by Cardinal Ottaviani to Pope Paul VI, "it would be a disastrous error for souls" if

"Thousands of human acts now approved" would have been "most unwisely condemned to the penalties of Hell up to Pius XI and Pius XII".

Anger and criticism

In the wake of *Humanae vitae*, many people, especially Catholics, were deeply irritated; there has hardly ever been an encyclical that has aroused such an angry protest within the Church. Although this kind of writing does not enjoy the so-called papal infallibility, it does have an authoritative character, it is an expression of the supreme magisterium of the popes and believers must comply with it both inwardly and outwardly.

The Catholic theologian Anton Antón Antweiler offered one of the most profound replies. In an extensive critique, which is unique of its kind and which, not by chance, had to be edited by the author himself, it was pointed out that there was no mandate from God or Christ concerning marriage, since this had not been part of Catholic doctrine until the modern age; that moral theology was not guided by modern psychology, sociology, genetics or medicine, but by antiquated scholastic ideas; that the encyclical showed a total lack of scientific and anthropological knowledge, and was instead harsh and cruel and did not contribute anything to the understanding of marriage; that the encyclical manifested a total lack of scientific and anthropological knowledge, and was instead harsh and cruel, and neither provided a solution to the problem, nor it helpful to women, the family or society; on the contrary, the appeal to sacrifice and idealism had to appear to people in difficulty as pure sarcasm.

The theologian tested his boss's paper systematically, almost sentence by sentence, and in the same way, almost sentence by sentence, reduced it to absurdity with comforting logic and lucidity, with imposing serenity and, from time to time, when it was unavoidable, with that subtle and deadly irony which befits the subject matter.

"(...) Completely sclerotised".

If two large groups of Nobel Prize winners had already asked Paul VI before the papal document "to review the Roman Catholic position on the issue of birth control", after the publication of the document, more than two thousand American scientists stated in a letter of protest:

"We will no longer be swayed by appeals for world peace and the

compassion for the poor of a man whose actions only contribute to war and make poverty inevitable".

It is true that the encyclical adopted "a sclerotised point of view", as the president of the Union of Catholic Doctors, Saes, believed, and that it was "a catastrophe", as this (short-sighted) doctor also proclaimed, but the catastrophe is the Church, Christianity itself. And it has been since St. Paul, not since Paul VI! Whoever does not see this today is either blind or pretends to be blind. *Tertium non datur*.

Conscious birth control is indispensable in guiding human life; its importance can hardly be overestimated. Thanks to it we can decide on the size of the family and the interval between births, we can prevent material misery and health problems, as well as some marital crises and childhood traumas. The problem of an unwanted existence has serious consequences: "the child who is not expressly wanted by his parents takes revenge for his whole life for having been born. He takes revenge on his parents, on his peers, on the whole of humanity. The real crime is nothing but the revenge of unwanted children" ^[244].

Only according to the "rules of nature" or "as brother and sister".

And what rational solutions does the Church offer for the numerous problems related to human reproduction? What practicable proposals does it make from the individual and social point of view? What does it do to prevent the physical and psychological exhaustion of parents in large families or to prevent overpopulation and famine?

Basically, it oscillates between two extremes: either it doses its poor, i.e. its masses, with the only pleasure they can afford, turning it into a costly programme of painful exercises under the sign of the cross, watched over by penitential institutions and subjected to the obligation of constantly producing new Catholics, or else, if it does not love "according to the rules of

nature", demands strict asceticism, the "way of perfect chastity", "a life as brother and sister, after the remarkable example of the mother of God and St. Joseph": an alternative that could only have emerged from the brains of sadistic celibates.

It would not take the research of the Allensbach Institute of Demoscopy to find out who tends to fall into this trap and who are the biggest creditors of the Church: "birth control is practised less the worse the education and the lower the social class". 30% of upper and upper-middle class parents had not wished to have any of their children. This figure rose to 41% in the case of the majority middle class where the father had a manual trade and rose 53% among those surveyed who the Institute classified as being in the "lower social class". According to a survey by the Church itself, the distance from the Church increases proportionally with the level of education.

We can see some everyday results, by no means extreme, of the Catholic ban on birth control: a mother of four children admits to a French doctor that she is afraid of a new pregnancy, so she stays at work at night as long as she can and does not go to bed until her husband, a textile worker, is fast asleep; or, , she pretends to be exhausted so that he will leave her "alone".

"When I questioned her on the occasion of her fifth pregnancy, she told me that it had been impossible for her to give up sex completely. Another everyday case: a young couple who, after two and a half years of marriage, go to the doctor for their third pregnancy, she explains:

"Until marriage we had to keep ourselves pure for each other; now we will have to keep ourselves pure in order not to have any more children - it's maddening!

Problems of conscience, disagreements, economic hardship: does all this worry the clergy? Unemployment, squalid housing, rooms full of starving children... How many times have they been killed precisely because they had to be born! A Spanish synod says in 589: "Among the many complaints that have reached the synod, the most horrible is that in some regions of Spain there are parents who kill their children so as not to have to feed them".

But does all this move the priests or the ambitious hierarchs?

Are you concerned that, at present, some twenty million people die of starvation every year? Are you concerned that every year, in West Germany alone, almost one hundred children die as victims of maltreatment, with an estimated 9 to 95 per cent of all cases never even coming to light? Or that more than half of all cases of infants dying of asphyxia are supposed to be caused by suffocation? Or that mortality among children born to women who have given birth five times or more is twice that of children born to mothers who have given birth two to four times, and six times that of children born to mothers who have given birth only once? Are you concerned that the maternal feelings of over-fertile, consistently pregnant women are weaker than those of mothers with fewer children? Are you concerned that the 50% of women who do not use contraception become pregnant again within three months of the previous birth? Of course not. On the contrary: "better ten in the cradle than one in the conscience"!

At most, what can irritate the hierarchs are those tremendous news (only the news, of course) which from time to time goes round the world about the "incredible" state "of social neglect and moral depravity, cruelty and hunger, of the Catholic hospices of the great Italian cities" ^[245].

"Permanent sacrifices" or "the grace of the married state" for Catholics

But the Church does not want the happiness of a purely human love to be enjoyed in marriage. On the contrary, she condemns it as "the worst of the dangers that threaten married life", an expression in which, once again, clerical envy of married laymen is at work. "Ecclesiastical morality rejects the simple solutions of technicians who unwilling to make any sacrifice". He advocates "agere contra", i.e. voluntary renunciation, even when it is a question of worldly things whose use is authorised". He wants conjugal love to be like "a love of love

crucified", an "imitation of the crucified Saviour". He desires "the daily cross of married love" - this is called in Catholicism "the grace of the married state" - the "daily heroism of millions of married couples who see in the family home an altar on which it is good and holy to sacrifice one's love".

This is what masters need: the daily sacrifice of others! And not only with regard to marriage and sex. The Christian must live in utter affliction and torment. As one theologian claims in bold print, one has to go through "a life (...) of discomfort if one wants to aspire to Heaven". The "cross is linked to the daily life of religion" insisted Cardinal Garrone in 1972, while demanding "permanent sacrifices"; nothing new, by the way. "Suffering is the destiny of true Christians", the missal says. The dogmatics of Christianity is largely based on suffering, hardships, afflictions and tribulations, spiritual miseries and torments of all kinds; not on joy and happiness. It is misfortune that makes one long for Salvation. In short, the Church needs tormented, broken, unhappy people: illnesses, misfortunes, catastrophes (the temples are full in all wars!). Therefore, it arouses and nourishes feelings of guilt and sin, renunciation or sacrifice. For only then can he offer his balm, his assistance and consolation, his redemption, which costs him little and gives him much: the ideal of all wholesalers.

However, birth control has become exceptionally popular in the last few years. importance, and not only for the individual.

Welding the phallus of the poor...

Already in the early 19th century, the Anglican clergyman Robert Malthus had tried to fix overpopulation and poverty by means of sexual asceticism (*moral restraint*), recommending people to marry late and be chaste. His theory implied that he who has no money has basically no right to love. For according to the whole Catholic doctrine, sexual intercourse presupposes a desire to reproduce; but this could only be done by

The wealthy should be allowed to live, not the stunted and the crippled living in dingy hovels, as Malthus so clearly implied.

In England, the "apologist of capitalism" was appointed professor, in France and Germany the academies honoured him, and most of the economists of Europe declared themselves his disciples, even if they did not adhere to all his theses.

Kari August Weinhold from Halle, a former field surgeon in Saxony who had become a professor of surgery, set himself the audacious task of solving the Malthusian population problem from a medical point of view. In his wretched paper *"On the Majority Reproduction of Human Capital versus Exploitation Capital and Labour in Civilised European Countries together with Some Medico-Political Proposals for a Balance between Poverty and Welfare"* (1828), the imaginative scholar suggested that men should have their limbs welded, at least up to a certain age.

A harmless, Weinhold thought, "gentle" and "almost completely painless" thing that he himself had successfully experimented on young onanists, relying only on a little metal, lead, needle, thread and blowtorch (in brackets: a method that had already delighted Martial and Juvenal). The inspired scholar from Halle, however, intended that "soldering and metal sealing" should be required only until the celebration of marriage and only "for those who could prove that they did not possess sufficient assets to feed and educate children born out of wedlock until they came of age. Those who never obtained a position that would allow them to feed and educate a family would carry the welding all their lives" (!)^[246].

... Or employ their children in factories.

Christian society accepted neither the Malthusian proposals nor infibulation à la Weinhold. Instead, it was quick to employ its sons in the factories at fairly cheap prices. "The first to use the power of the big machines in cotton spinning", writes Heinrich

Wilhelm Bensen in 1847, in his book *The Proletariat*, which was widely consulted at the time, "already speculated on the labour of children, who are much more patient in dull and mechanical work than adults and are much cheaper (from 1.5 to 3.5 shillings a week). Scores of children were thrown into these spinning mills (it is estimated that, in 1796, the Peel family already employed over a thousand children), recruited mainly from the workhouses on the pretext of giving them an education as "apprentices". Children as young as five years old - most were between seven and nine years old - could be seen locked in small, smoke-filled rooms, their fingers moving as they tried to reknit broken threads in order to complete the monotonous work of the machine with the utmost attention. The master arbitrarily fixed the working day: fourteen, even sixteen hours a day, including a short break for a poor snack. Others made them work uninterruptedly, day and night, renewing the staff every twelve hours. Others set a working day of fourteen hours or more, and only gave a short break to the most fatigued so that they could sleep. Otherwise, thanks to the watchman's long whip, the little ones were kept awake as long as they could... But if the children were deformed or physically wasted away, if they became definitively useless for work or half-idiots, the plutocracy did not feel moved to worry about such a thing. For them, the exploitation of these children is doubly advantageous. In the first place, they make a great profit out of cheap labour, and, in addition, the exploitation of children removes a part of the population, the excess of which could become dangerous.

Can humanity survive?

The danger is increasing all the time. In the early days, it took the world more than a millennium to double its population; the time frame fell to two centuries in the early modern age and today it is estimated at fifty years. As many human beings lived in the last century as the previous six hundred thousand years.

If it were not for birth control, which has been imposed on the majority of the population in the twentieth century, the Federal Republic of Germany would now have one hundred and eighty million inhabitants. In South America, where one third of all Catholics in the world live and where the annual per capita income of the population is less than one thousand marks, there are now about two hundred million human beings. In less than a generation from now, in the year 2000, it is expected that there will be between six and seven hundred million people in that territory, and in the world - assuming a peaceful era - more than six billion. Without family planning, in two hundred years' time there would be, at present rates of growth, one hundred billion people, and our world would be a gigantic city, excluding the seas, the great mountains and the polar circles. Birth control has therefore become an ethical obligation.

But while our leading demographers alarm humanity and, for example, Kingsley Davis, director of the International Institute of Demography at the University of California, calls tax support for large families "criminal" and "the murder of our children's children" and considers that "the only hope for human survival is the systematic taxation of married couples with children", calls tax support for large families "criminal" and the "murder of our children's children" and considers that "the only hope for human survival is the systematic taxation of marriages with children, the legalisation of termination of pregnancy, sterilisations and the widespread use of contraception", Catholicism persists unyielding in its prohibition ^[247]. And it does so all the more strongly at a time when its percentage growth is below that of the world population and the Church does not even seem to be in a position to ensure its own reproduction.

"A look at the eternal stars of the Christian moral law".

The doctrine on marriage inculcated by Pius XII and the hitherto valid ecclesiastical law has remained valid even after Vatican II; reproduction, the begetting and raising of children, is still the "first purpose" of marriage, "like its crown";

even today, "the whole of married life must be a constant yes to the order of creation, that is to say, to fertility" and the sexuality of the spouses must lead to "a natural, consummated and fruitful relationship", avoiding any "objectively serious sin against marital chastity" and any "objectively serious sin against marital chastity" and any "objectively serious sin against marital chastity", and any "objectively serious sin against marital chastity".

"debasement that tends to turn a woman into a prostitute" (!)

"Leaving the decision on the number of children to the parents is dangerous. For the prudence that the subject demands, I do not want to speak about it in more detail" warned Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo in the mid-sixties, with a notable lack of arguments. "We follow St. Augustine, who did not hesitate to say that married people end up in rape and prostitution (!) when they do not live their marriage in a Christian way and separate the marriage relationship from its purpose".

The meaning of all this becomes clear when someone estimates that the normal physiological fecundity of a married woman means between ten and twelve children, demanding, moreover, a return to "the popular Christian family" of "eight to twelve children, one every two years". (And then, in each generation, a crusade for a "people with no space"!) Title: A look at the eternal stars of the Christian moral law.

Even if the world sinks...

It seems that the Pope has recently launched a secret diplomatic offensive with various governments and international organisations - notably the United States and the UN - to ban funding and support for family planning. The Vatican itself has confirmed the existence of a secret circular on birth control 'sent to all Vatican representations. The latest and most terrible consequences of this policy are illustrated by Dutch theologian Jan Visser's answer on German television to the question of whether the Church would fold its arms in the face of a fatal overpopulation of the Earth: "Yes. If it is truly convinced that this is God's law, I would say yes. Even if the world sinks, what is right must happen.

Fiat justitia et pereat mundus. In 1959, the Jesuit Gundiach interpreted Pius XII's doctrine on nuclear war in a similar way: "Recourse to atomic warfare is not absolutely immoral". Even if our planet were to be destroyed, Gundiach writes, it would be of little importance. "First, because we are absolutely certain that the world will not last forever, and second, because we are not responsible for the end of the world. So we can say that if the Lord, by His divine Providence, has brought us to that situation or has allowed us to reach it, we must from that moment bear witness of fidelity to His Order and assume responsibility" [248].

"All the splendour of the earth will go up in smoke and ashes". That is certain. In other words, in the event of disaster due to atomic war or overpopulation... we will always have a good conscience. First: the global massacre will be a "testimony of faithfulness"; second: the end due to lack of space will be "justice". This discourse comes from the same kind of people, people who devoutly raise their eyes and proclaim: "better ten in the cradle than one in the conscience!".

For what else, who rejects the means contraceptives such as "unnatural", "amoral" and "ungodly", supports abortion in practice. Because those who are more likely to have abortions are those who cannot use contraceptives, i.e. Catholics than Protestants.

The ambiguous position of the Protestant churches

Today, Protestantism on both sides of the Atlantic judges family planning rather more liberally. If at the Lambeth conference of 1908 the Anglican church had condemned "with horror" any artificial means of contraception, in 1958 it declared that reproduction was not the sole purpose of marriage and said that it was

It was "quite untrue that sexual intercourse was sinful in character when children were not expressly desired". And in 1960 the Committee on Moráis of the Church of Scotland found it self-evident that "to bring

a child into the world just to satisfy a physical desire is less moral than considering reproduction as an act of responsibility".

All forms of birth control that do not have negative side effects on health are permitted: condoms, diaphragms, coitus interruptus, etc.; on the one hand, one can appeal to the Bible, which ignores such prohibitions, and on the other hand, one can logically argue that, from the point of view of ethical principles, taking advantage of non-fertile days is no more legitimate than using mechanical means. The national council of the Protestant Church in the USA and the Anglican Primate and Archbishop of Canterbury authorised the use of the Pill in 1961, judging it to be completely lawful and compatible with Christian morality.

However, Protestantism agrees with the papacy in that it rejects birth control practised for pure pleasure and convenience and, above all, in that it condemns abortion radically and decisively.

It is only in recent years that a humanitarian trend towards termination of pregnancy has begun to emerge in the evangelical ranks, although these are still very isolated opinions. For example, in 1967, Howard Moody of Judson Memorial Church in New York founded a National Religious Counselling Service for the Termination of Pregnancy, which has since made possible tens of thousands of abortions; The 1968 Baptist convention also said that abortion should be left "to personal discretion" up to the twelfth week of gestation; and in 1971, an evangelical synod in Berlin-West Berlin was at least honest enough to call for reform in the criminal treatment of abortion and an end to the "hypocrisy of the present practice".

The Catholic hierarchy clung to its positions. The Second Vatican Council continued to qualify abortion as "an abominable crime" [249].

CHAPTER 22

THE ABORTION BAN

Even if it will starve to death after twenty-four hours of larval life, or have a shelf life of one year due to epilepsy, two years due to tuberculosis, or six years due to hereditary syphilis; even if it will bear the stigmata of paternal alcoholism or maternal malnutrition, or the stigma of an extra-marital relationship... according to article 218, it must first of all be born: the idol demands it.

GOTTFRIED BENN

Everyone worries about me: the churches, the state, the doctors and the judges... For nine months. But after that: I'll manage to carry on. For fifty years nobody will worry about me; nobody. On the other hand, for nine months they kill themselves if someone tries to kill me. Isn't that rather peculiar care?

KURT TUCHOLSKY

The clergy protects life before birth. But if hundreds of thousands of young people are torn to pieces, the clergy do nothing to prevent it, but bless flags and cannons.

ERNST KREUDER^[250]

There have been unwanted pregnancies for as long as man has existed, and both abortions and their punishment have a remote origin, as some of the most ancient writings testify. However, some of the great religions know of no express prohibition of abortion: Islam even goes so far as to permit the operation up to the sixth month. Among the ancient Greeks and Romans it was also normal; Plato and Aristotle defended it and the society in which they lived considered it "good": perhaps that was the reason why St. Paul, the hammer of sexual sins, did not touch the problem.

"Women must also defend Europe!"

From the second century onwards, the Head of the Church, concerned for the majority of the "People of God", has defined abortion as a very great crime. "Every woman," teaches St. Augustine, "who does anything in order not to bring into the world as many children as she could, is as guilty of all these murders as she who attempts to injure herself after pregnancy.

Abortionists were treated as murderers and according to the Synod of Elvira (306) had to undergo public penance for the rest of their lives, which was reduced by successive ecclesiastical documents to ten years for the guilty and, in some cases, twenty years for accomplices. An attempted abortion was prosecuted in the Middle Ages as if it were murder; sometimes the termination of a pregnancy had to be expiated for twelve years and infanticide for fifteen, and in the case of premeditated murder of an infant, the culprit could end her days in a convent. Today, the Church still does not allow eugenic indications (termination of pregnancy due to mental illness of the mother or other diseases inheritable by the foetus), ethical indications (termination of a pregnancy resulting from rape) or social indications (poverty, unmarried mother or too young), and imposes excommunication on all those involved, including the woman concerned.

No killing of the foetus. No abortion. And then, in the war, a vast number of mass graves occupied by those who had the "right to be born". The life of the unborn is protected so that the born can die. As Kari Kraus ironically remarks, "the fatherland, when the time comes, will remember the mothers who abort adult children". Which today, on the lips of a military archpriest, translates as: "Mothers must also defend Europe". A message so unequivocal that Christians themselves are now outraged: "It is about that peculiar protection or interest in the future life that is extinguished as soon as the child appears. Then you can spit it out in one way or another (...) This is of no importance whatsoever".

But for man to be able to kill, he must first be born. And to do so, every means is used, no amena/as or good advice is spared, and theologians conjure up a commandment that they nimbly turn inside out during the war: "Thou shalt not kill". A commandment that suddenly, in an embryo of centimetres or millimetres, becomes incontrovertible. "Whoever kills one of these beings is a murderer". Or even worse: he commits "a most grievous theft against God", according to the formula used by Cardinal Faulhaber, who, of course, helped to kill in both world wars those who were not stolen. The latter was not from God; the latter pleased the Lord: it was a sacrifice that pleased Him. "With God", it was said on the cartridge cases of millions of dying fallen at some place of fields of battle; "gladly", says Faulhaber in his capacity as military chaplain; "beautifully," says another churchman.

But above all: baptised. Because dead foetuses have not been baptised (eternal wailing). And yet they have an "immortal soul" from the first instant, from the moment of conception, something that has not always been known. On the contrary, according to the majority of the Fathers, including St. Thomas, the soul entered the body of boys at forty days, and that of girls at eighty days: yet another example, by the way, of defamation of women.

"To you I cry out from the deepest despair (...)" or "the comfort of the water".

The secular arm of the Church acted brutally against abortion and infanticide, often punished in the same way. Guilty girls were often insaculated, i.e. put in a sack - sometimes together with a dog, a rooster, a cat and a snake - and thrown into the water while singing a song appropriate to the situation: "To you I cry out from the deepest despair (...)". In the 18th century, Christianity still eliminated young mothers in this way. Almost everywhere in Europe, they were tormented with burning tongs, buried alive or impaled.

"Bury alive the child exterminator: a reed in her mouth and a stake in her heart" states, concisely and conclusively, the Brenngenborn Instruction of 1418.

The Constitutio Criminalis Carolina of the devout Charles V - criminal legislation which remained in force until the 18th century, and in some German states

until 1871 - was somewhat more civilised and humane: "Item, if a woman kills with premeditation, by night and with malice aforethought, her child alive and already formed, she will generally be buried alive and impaled. However, to avoid complications in such cases, such wrongdoers may be drowned when the availability of water at the place of trial makes it possible. But if such crimes happen often, in order to frighten such wicked women, we wish to authorise recourse to the aforesaid burial and impalement, or that the wrongdoer be torn with burning tongs before being drowned, all according to the advice of legal experts".

... And according to the morals of the Church. Because justice - or rather injustice - and church morality are closely linked, especially in the field of sexuality (infra). Christianity is responsible for the fact that laws against the termination of pregnancy still exist in most states in our cultural sphere.

In Germany, section 218 of the penal code, as it stood in 1871, punishes a pregnant woman who has had an abortion with up to five years in prison and accomplices with up to ten years; at the end of Hitler's dictatorship, a prison term of up to ten years was introduced.

introduced the death penalty for such a case. The 1962 criminal law reform bill maintained the prohibition of abortion with limited exceptions. And since 1973, under the current law, a woman who "kills the fruit of her womb or permits its death at the hands of another" can spend up to five years in prison.

It is true that nowadays sentences are lighter and the vast majority of cases are not even tried, which increases the injustice suffered by those punished with fines and prison sentences.

-No rich woman has yet been brought before a judge because of Article 218", says the renowned social democratic jurist Gustav Radbruch ⁽¹²⁵¹⁾.

West Germanic Odyssey

West German law, which prohibits abortion even in the worst situations of social need, authorises it only on medical indication and with the backing of a commission of experts, which is an extremely rare occurrence. The following report can make it clear what kind of complications this solution continues to generate and how little a law of assumptions can help to solve the desolate situation of pregnant women in the Federal Republic.

"A woman who already has several children and has been ill for years attempts suicide in the second month of pregnancy by taking pills. She is saved, but learns that the foetus may have been damaged by the pills; she is advised to have an abortion. However, as she had moved house and therefore changed doctor, she did not know who would be able to make the request. She turns to the relevant health department. The health department cannot do anything and sends her to the medical association. Doubts in the family; the woman, overwhelmed, gets worse. She decides to ask the new doctor to make the application. He writes to the medical association. The medical association replies acknowledging receipt of the application and sending information on the costs of the necessary opinions and the amount that the social security pays, and

He adds: "Please pay a fee of ten marks for administration costs into the account of the college. When you have done so, we will send you the names and addresses of the medical experts by return of post". (When you have done so!)

"The experts are unable to reach an agreement. A new expert has to be called in to act as arbitrator. And again it is said: first pay, and then the management will come!"

"At last, the decision of the experts of the college authorising the abortion has arrived. In the meantime, almost two months have passed without any premeditated delays on anyone's part (wrong procedures, family doubts, mail). And that is when the most painful part begins for the woman: finding a hospital that will carry out the authorised abortion. On one side the nuns refuse; on the other, a doctor has medical and ethical scruples. Perhaps the third hospital is full. The woman continues to search, the pregnancy continues and the embryo grows, as does the danger to the mother and pressure on the doctor. If new cases are approved, the delays in the medical instances will surely multiply".

Punishment: "Milder than if a poacher kills a hare".

In the USA, where the "abortion battle" has only begun, voluntary termination of pregnancy is punishable throughout the country - with penalties ranging from one (Kansas) to twenty (Mississippi) years in prison - although there too the laws are only sporadically applied. In most cases, simple attempted abortion is considered punishable, even if the woman is not pregnant! In the early 1970s, thirty-one states only allowed abortion if the mother's life was in danger.

Nevertheless, intervention has been legal since 1973. Mortality has declined dramatically; in New York, as a result of fewer unwanted children, the percentage of births to natural children has fallen by almost half, the percentage of foundlings by almost a third, and the percentage of unwanted children by a third.

the social burden by several million dollars. However, various groups, especially Catholics, are attacking abortion. Even a Supreme Court justice, Harry Blackum (otherwise rather conservative), complains: "I have never received so many aggressive letters. I am accused of being a Pontius Pilate, an Hereditary and a butcher of Dachau.

In other countries, abortion is still punishable by heavy prison sentences, and in some cases the simple defence of abortion is prosecuted. Moreover, the level of penalties seems to Catholics to be "generally lighter than if a poacher kills a hare", "too weak" for "such a terrible crime, which seriously undermines the public good". And, as if that were not enough, after the Second World War, with Hitler's extermination of the Jews and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan, and while the genocide in the Far East was still taking place, the theologian Haring dared to write that "abortion is a crime which characterises, like almost no other, the low moral standard of the modern world". This is their way of understanding morality!

The real war criminals

War and abortion are related to such an extent that those responsible for abortions are described as the "real culprits" of wars and, for this reason, one would "almost" want them to end up on the scaffold! And, as the Catholic Bider argues, "Is it not precisely women, for whom the life of their own children is not even sacred, who contribute the most to destroying respect for life? They are the real culprits of contempt for God as the Lord of Life; and I would almost go so far as to say that in the war crimes trials those who most deserve it have not been hanged!

The "new euthanasia programme".

In other words, the Nazi war criminals were "almost" unjustly hanged... It is normal that this idea comes from the same people who defend Article 218, so dear to the Nazis, and who accuse their opponents of giving "a free hand to murder" and... a new "euthanasia programme"!

In the D.R.A., where, since March 1972, a woman could decide on own during the first three months if she wanted to terminate her pregnancy - completely free of charge, including pre- and post-treatment - the Catholic hierarchy (in a declaration read from all the pulpits) prophesied "a disastrous future for all the people" and the evangelical hierarchy "a general dulling of consciences".

For their part, the prelates of the Federal Republic have not failed to speak out in the controversy over abortion and voluntary sterilisation: from Archbishop Schaufele of Freiburg to Archbishop Bengsch of Berlin, from Archbishop Döpfner of Munich to Prelate Jaeger of Paderborn, whom probably only the situation prevents from moving from a cold war to a hot one. In any case, he now condemns the "new euthanasia programme" and the "elimination of defenceless life in the womb" with the same Catholic ardour with which he once, as Hitler's military chaplain, described Hitler's Russian opponents as "degenerate to the point of animalism" and with the same holy zeal with which he later defended the presence of atomic weapons in the Federal Republic and the "fulfilment of the crusade ideal (...) in its modern form".

The bishops are also instructing the Berlin government in unison that an abortion is only justifiable on medical grounds and that all other grounds for decriminalisation, including rape, must be rejected. Of course, a few years ago, scraping was allowed for raped nuns! However, what is allowed for nuns can be very expensive for other women. Because things do not change and in 1978 a Position Statement of the German Bishops' Commissariat on the protection of the life of the unborn was delivered in Bonn.

The report also called for the state to punish abortion as a crime against humanity. "premeditated murder against a human life".

But in the religious concert, the *Osservatore Romano* was the leading voice. Thus, at the beginning of 1972, it accused the SPD-FPD government of having taken "inhuman decisions" and even a return to "the ideology of the Third Reich". Other Catholic newspapers in Italy wrote: "worse than Hitler" or "the hospitals where abortions and sterilisations were carried out at that time were called Auschwitz, Dachau and Mauthausen". So a social-liberal government is equated with the murderers who carried out a criminal forced sterilisation, who killed social democrats and liberals and who promoted a sexual policy along the lines of the papacy (supra), which, for its part, supported them intensively almost to the last moment ⁽¹²⁵³⁾, because of a voluntary sterilisation project.

Invitation to the apparitions

And, in addition to the slander and lies, the cheesiness that is foisted on the masses by means of rags and even posters, if necessary.

"Imagine now," suggests a monk fancifully, "those hundreds of thousands of unborn walking through the whole of Germany, all of them dressed in mourning clothes. An impressive crowd of creatures, a ghostly procession about a hundred kilometres long. They travel through all the counties of Germany, its great capitals, its small towns and its villages until they reach the last farm, and raise their innocent manilas inculcating the Christian parents who did not grant them life, neither earthly nor eternal, inculcating the married couples at whose doors they knocked asking to be admitted in the name of the Child God and who, mercilessly, threw them back into the dark night of death. And this legion of spirits formed by those who were never born ascends to the throne of the Holy Trinity, before which they raise their grave accusations against the Christian spouses who, selfish, lubricious, effeminate and cruel (...)" Et cetera, etcetera, etcetera.

"Now imagine those hundreds of thousands of unborn (...). Anyone who is not a corny Catholic can easily imagine them. On the other hand, imagine, to cite just one case among thousands, the child of a twenty-year-old deaf-mute girl who in 1971 in Nuremberg was still refused permission to have an abortion, despite the fact that she already had five deaf-mute children living in asylums!

"The culture of the Church" or "may the mother die in a state of grace".

The Catholic Schreiber, who in his work *Mother and Child in the Culture of the Church* shows even the most banal examples as evidence of clerical beneficence, offers four appendices of sources as evidence in the appendix. An instruction for midwives from the beginning of the 17th century advises that "if the dilemma of the mother's death or that of the child arises, she - the midwife - should first of all see to it that the child is baptised, for it is preferable that the mother should die in a state of grace than that the child should remain unbaptised".

In our days, an 18th century medical historian notes that "For pregnant women and women in labour without resources, practically nothing was done. The authorities took care of unmarried mothers in order to monitor and punish them, which was considered more justifiable than caring for them. When there was no money, women, regardless of their status, married or not, had to work to the point of exhaustion, very often in absolutely unsanitary conditions. Among the poor, child labour was obligatory.

The Church continued to prohibit the killing of the foetus, even if there was a risk to the life of the mother, well into the 20th century. "It is not permitted to destroy the child - for example, by craniotomy, embryotomy, etc. - even to save the life of the mother. And even more: "direct removal of the foetus is also prohibited even if the doctor considers a "therapeutic abortion" necessary to save the life of the mother and even if there is a possibility that, without such an intervention, they would die.

mother and child". "It is better that the mother should die in the grace of God than that a criminal hand should deliberately kill the child. It is better that mother and child should die by God's choice than that a murderous hand should take the life of the child" [254].

Jonathan Swift's "modest proposal".

And in that : what about the children?

In the Middle Ages, they were allowed to stay in workhouses and orphanages until they could "go begging" for themselves; for, apart from a little religion, they had learned hardly anything. Later, in the late Middle Ages and the early Modern Age, when the armies of beggars and vagabonds were constantly growing and there arose - to use Marx's words - a "mass of outlaw proletarians", the old, the infirm and the infirm were helped, but the others were generally hunted down: they were flogged in public, branded on their chests, backs or shoulders, had an ear or a piece of it cut off or otherwise mutilated, and finally, if they had been repeatedly set upon without a job - irrespective of whether there was one - they were executed without further ado.

In 1729, the great satirist Jonathan Swift makes his "Modest Proposal how the Children of the Poor may be prevented from becoming a Burden to their Parents or to the State, and how they may redound to the Benefit of the Community". Swift recommends using them "to feed and clothe many thousands of people"; in particular, "a healthy, well-nursed child is, at the age of one year, a most delicate, wholesome and nutritious dish, whether stewed, roasted, boiled or stewed (...), as a fricassee or as a ragout" and poor children's meat could be produced and then offered for sale at a very low price. Swift's prognoses were: a significant improvement in the material situation of parents, a reduction in intentional abortions, infanticides and, above all, the general lack of affection, as well as a decrease in the poaching of vermin and "an honourable

competition among married women (...) to see which of them could bring the fattest child to the market".

Of the seven hundred and forty children who entered the Kassel include between 1763 and 1781, only eighty-eight were alive at the end of 1781, and only ten of them lived to the age of fourteen ⁽¹²⁵⁵⁾.

Today's children's paradises

In 1927, 80% of Vienna's population still lived in rooms occupied by at least four people! At the end of the 1950s, according to a survey of the living conditions of more than six thousand children in the working-class district of Kreuzberg in Berlin, two thirds of the schoolchildren lived in one- or two-room houses with no garden or balconies, almost 40% had no toilets and many of them lived in one-room houses occupied by three (39%), four (25%), five or more (15%) persons. One child in three had neither a place to work nor a corner to play, and one child in eight did not even have a bed of his or her own. And still in 1965, eight hundred and fifty thousand families in the Federal Republic of Germany lived in barracks, cellars or garrets.

In Catholic Italy, more than a million people still live from home work, poorly paid and without social security; 50% of young educated industrial workers (!) have a weekly salary of about five thousand lire; 1.3 million Italians are without any kind of work: in the south of Italy, 48.3% of those of working age. Not to mention the calamities that plague Catholic South America! But the embryo must be protected?

The heaviest blood tribute is paid by the poor

Abortion, according to the law, is a crime. Thus, the majority of the population would be made up of criminals, criminals, by the way, in every sense of the word.

social classes. A. S. Neill, the well-known founder of Summerhill - who calls the problem of abortion one of the most repugnant and self-righteous symptoms of the disease that afflicts mankind - rightly states that "there is not a judge, priest, doctor, teacher and other props of society who would not rather have his daughter have an abortion than endure the shame of her becoming an unwed mother".

In these situations - as in most - people of means have an advantage. They can go anywhere in the world to ensure a legal, medically impeccable and almost risk-free operation, poor women put themselves in the hands of bunglers and often end up sterile, fall ill (about 30%!) or die. According to research carried out in New York in the 1970s, 56% of abortions performed on Puerto Rican women and 50% of those performed on black women ended in the death of the patient, while the percentage among white pregnant women was 25%. Newsweek commented on this fact with the sentence: "The greatest blood tribute is paid by the poor and the marginalised".

According to a scientific statistic that has never been refuted, 875,750 abortions were performed in Germany at the end of the 1920s. Gottfried Benn estimated at the time that, between doctors and patients, the population was "liable to the state for more than thirteen million years of imprisonment each year for abortion offences". Every year, some twenty thousand women died during these operations and seventy-five thousand were afflicted with puerperal fevers.

Pastor Legius also lamented in the magazine *Reforma* that "most of them do not die during the interventions, as a punishment for the lost and gullible. Fortunately, a significant number of modern Berliners die of the so-called puerperium, as punishment for having had an abortion. Nevertheless, the number of these useless women who survive to continue their wretched lives is to be regretted.

In the 1950s it was estimated that there were about two abortions for every birth in the Federal Republic. Apart from the eventual death of the patient, the list of possible consequences would include depression, neurosis, aversion to the man who insisted on the operation, and aversion to the woman who insisted on the operation.

and often sterility. Approximately 15 to 20 percent of patients are unable to have more children, which in West Germany alone amounts to between 140,000 and 200,000 women per year. Not so many years ago, the estimated annual number of abortions in our country was still several hundred thousand (despite the Pill), with thousands of women dying during these interventions.

In mid-century France, there were as many abortions as births; two-thirds of the patients were married women. Those who underwent the procedure were not young girls who had had some unspeakable affair, but mothers who could no longer afford to bear children. In the 1960s, 80% of French women had had an abortion. And many of them must have had more than fifteen illegal abortions.

At the same time, in the United States, about 80 per cent of premarital pregnancies, 15 per cent of marital pregnancies and more than 80 per cent of postmarital pregnancies were terminated. It is quite significant that states made a point of warning medical students about the social and legal problems of abortion, while there was so little discussion of termination of pregnancy techniques that the training of doctors was only "fragmentary". Efficient and safe methods could have been developed, but the prevailing morality prevented it.

Abortion legalisation and significant mortality decline

By , abortion, which had banned throughout the Christian era, was legalised in the Soviet Union in 1920 and left to the care of doctors in public hospitals; before that date, approximately 50% of patients suffered septicaemic complications and 4% died as a result of the operation. Abortion was again banned - with few exceptions - in Stalin's time, but in 1955 it was once again banned.

legalised. In Russia, some five million legal abortions are performed every year, and foreign women can also undergo such an operation. The same is true in Poland, Yugoslavia, Japan and, since 1968, in England, where the "capital crime" was still punishable at the end of the 19th century by life imprisonment. Respect for human life has not diminished in any of these states. What was happening in Russia when Stalin banned abortion? What was happening in Germany when the Nazis protected the "life of the unborn" with the death penalty? The arguments used by Stalin and Hitler are the same as those used by the Church today, *casu substratum*.

The legalisation of abortion considerably mortality and morbidity. An abortion performed by specialists is virtually risk-free; if anything, it has fewer risks than a normal birth. Wherever abortion under medical care is permitted, the known consequences of illegal interventions - fever, infections, a certain type of sterility - tend to disappear immediately. In the Eastern bloc states there were six deaths per 100,000 operations in the late 1950s; in Czechoslovakia the figure had fallen to 1.2 in the early 1960s and in Hungary it was 0.8 in 1968! Compared to these figures, mortality in illegal abortions performed in the West is ten times higher ^[256].

In this way, millions of women have become the victims of religious institutions that continue to influence our laws, that continue to preach the dogma of original sin, that continue to condemn extra-marital pleasure, that continue to try to sabotage the sexual education of young people and to feed hypocrisy, neuroses and aggression, as the following chapters will show.

CHAPTER 23

ORIGINAL SIN

When one hears the scandal that a theologian organises because a man whom God created a lover of pleasure sleeps with his companion whom God made so pleasant and charming, would one not say, rather, that the world is burning on all four sides?

DENIS DIDEROT

There is nothing wrong with sexuality; the traditional view of it is sick. I believe that no evil brings so much misfortune to people in our society (...)

BERTRAND RUSSELL

What was the ideal in whose light sex, sexual intercourse and pleasure have been seen for centuries? (...) The dominant image has been the realm of the dirty, the anal (...) Sexual pleasure still considered by many people to be something akin to the pleasure of urinating and defecating.

FRITZ LEIST, Catholic (1973)^[257]

The concept of guilt, coined in the 14th century BC in the Egypt of Akhenaten (Amenophis IV), was taken up by the Hebrews and introduced into Christianity through the Old Testament. But the Old Testament considered as sin not only the "sinful" act, but the simple indulgence in sin.

The same, the pleasurable memory of the sin committed or the disconsolation for the one that has not yet been perpetrated: the simple desire to do something forbidden.

Among the various forms of sin, sensual passion, sexuality, has always been the most important. In Catholicism, as its own ranks write, there is a "long tradition" according to which "every sexual attitude is or involves sin", "every sexual act is shown to be concretely evil because of its indissoluble relationship with concupiscence". "The priests referred to this sin in every sermon and under every pretext. As the German saying goes, they often 'painted the devil on the wall'. They presented these faults as if they were the most serious".

The beginning of the Christian obsession with sin

The sinister insistence on "sexual offence" has little or nothing to do with Jesus. Nevertheless, in the Apostolic Letter of the New Testament, the assembly of the apostles already presents the well-known triad of idolatry, impurity and murder as capital or deadly sins. These became the classic crimes of Christianity, the crimes par excellence. (, the synods of the first centuries did not prescribe any kind of penance for murder because they believed it did not exist among Christians.)

But surely the greatest Christian preacher of the psychosis of sin is at the beginning of the story. This is Paul, who never tires of admonishing, admonishing, frightening: "sin has come into the world", the body "is dominated by sin", "in the members" lies the "law of sin". God has condemned the sins of the flesh", men are "slaves of sin", "servants of sin", they are "in the flesh", "in the members" lies the "law of sin", "in the members" lies the "law of sin".

"sold under sin", "all have sinned" and so on, just to use quotations from the Letter to the Romans.

Christian doctrine on the vices of the third century already placed gluttony and lust at the top, and finally, St. Augustine systematised sexual disgust for theology. St. Augustine systematised sexual disgust for theology.

Augustine, according to Theodor Heuss, "the purest and... deepest source" from which Catholic thought springs, a character who was a lover not only of several women, but perhaps also of some men, who did not control his own sexual problems, who vacillated between pleasure and frustration, who prayed: "grant me chastity (...), but not now!" who only became religious after he had had enough of fornication, when his weakness for women turned into the opposite - as it happens to some men as they grow old - and when he had various health ailments, especially troublesome for a rhetorician (lungs, chest), this Augustine was the one who created the classic patristic doctrine of sin and the battle against concupiscence, influencing decisively until today Christian morality and the destiny of millions of sexually inhibited and repressed Westerners.

For St. Augustine, there is no love other than the love of God; love proper is, at bottom, the Devil's affair. "There are two forms of love: one is holy, the other is profane. "When love increases, concupiscence decreases. "Love is nourished by the same thing that weakens sensual craving; that which kills the latter, gives fullness to the former". Therefore, true love can only be chaste. "True love is chaste and pure" (sic), lisps Cassie in Dos Passos' brilliant *Manhattan Transfer*. Augustine speaks of love not with an error of diction, but with an error of concept: "Both Susanna, the wife, and Anna, the widow, and Mary, the virgin, wrap it in chastity".

The bishop of Hippo was indignant and scandalised by the coitus and orgasms he had enjoyed in more vigorous days; now he deplored even the temptations of the palate, and pleasure was for him a thing of the Devil, "abominable", "infernal", an "irritating inflammation", a "horrible burning", a "disease", a "madness", a "putrefaction", a "foul slime", and so on and so forth. The words come out of him as from a bursting bubo ^[258].

Erections in paradise?

The theologian of Christian marriage" (supra) would like all married people to be chaste and blushes at "a certain degree of animal movement"; he asserts that all should beget their children as in , without voluptuousness, and hesitates painfully - in a question in itself laughable - when he supposes that before "original sin" there was only a "chaste union between man and woman"; when examining the question of the "chaste union between man and woman" (supra), he is not so sure of the "chaste union between man and woman" (supra); when examining the "chaste union between man and woman" (supra) he is not so sure of the "chaste union between man and woman (supra)" (supra).

"In the last years of his life, however, he accepts the possibility that in Paradise there was sexual desire.

Subsequently, most theologians, such as William of Champeaux, conjecture that Adam put the penis in Eve's penis.

"as when someone puts his finger on something without any kind of pleasure" and Eve, according to Robert Pully, "for her part, received the male seed without ardor". In these authors, all genital emotion appears displaced, incompatible with heavenly bliss. Mechthild of Magdeburg (supra) and other virtuous men therefore believed that the first parents lacked sexual organs:

*For God deprived them of the organs of shame and
they were clothed in the garb of angels.
They had to beget their children with
holy love,
just as the sun reflects playfully on the water
and the water, on the other hand, remains
untouched.*

whole affair is "a mystery of a supernatural order" and, although it is not a "positively comprehensible" is of great help in "understanding human existence in greater depth", referring, obviously, to The "radical necessity of salvation"; therefore, original sin is something like the expression in negative "of the luminous truth of Salvation". Or to put it another : one has to be a "sinner" to be able to be "redeemed".

The doctrine of original sin appears neither in Jesus nor St. Paul.

The *peccatum originale* is, according to Christian doctrine, the widespread corruption of mankind, a consequence of Adam and Eve's lapse; to a certain extent, it is a participation of all in the "Fall".

As a result, all human beings, with the exception of Mary, are sinners from the very first moment, i.e. they are automatically implicated in the sin of our first parents. The invisible stain - for understandable reasons - of original sin is, of course, also invisibly erased by baptism. Unfortunately, however, its visible consequences do not disappear: the hardships of life, illness, death and, above all, sexual desire, which is specifically connected with original sin.

As with everything else (supra), this abstruse *theologumenon*, "an essential and inalienable part of the Christian religion", according to Pius XII, and "an essential and inalienable part of the Christian religion", according to Pius XII. The "centre and heart of Christianity" according to Schopenhauer is not unique to Christian thought. Pagan cults have drawn on analogous ideas for centuries and even millennia.

In Jesus there is no reference to original sin, so his silence has been explained by the inability of his listeners "to assimilate the meaning of a mystery of such characteristics". (On the other hand, they Instead, they understood much more complicated mysteries, such as that of the Trinity!). The doctrine became dogma belatedly, and although St. Paul was invoked at the time (Rom. 5, 12), he - like the rest of the New Testament authors - did not uphold it, even though for him human beings are evil "by nature" and are sunk, without exception, in the "mire of immorality" and of the "vile passions". That is why, in his community of Corinth, the children of Christian parents were not baptised. And although baptism is supposed to be indispensable to erase original sin and no one who has not been baptised can enter Heaven, the custom of not baptising infants was maintained, since the early Fathers of the Church expressly pointed out that they were free from sin. Although some have wanted to attribute the thesis of sin to him

Tertullian also vigorously opposed the baptism of infants [259]. But as the new doctrine took hold, baptisms were performed at an earlier age.

Saint Augustine and "the dynamics of the moral life".

But the real father of the dogma of original sin - which did not acquire the status of an article of faith until the 16th century - was St Augustine, who believed that Adam's sin was a crime of a manifold nature and that the eternal penalties of Hell awaited unbaptised children (the mildest!). Influenced by St Paul's sexual hatred and Manichean ideas of inherited evil, totally intoxicated by a repressed *cupiditas* and unable to think naturally about the natural, Augustine concluded that humanity is a "conglomerate of corruption" (*massa perditionis*) and a "damned mass" (*massa damnata*), intertwining original sin and concupiscence to such an extent that for him the two are almost identical: evil is transmitted through the act of generation.

St Augustine who, as a psychologist and ethicist, describes above all "the dynamics of the moral life" says that, just after the terrible loss of the state of grace, the first parents noticed that "something new was happening in their bodies". Alas, all would have been well, or, to put it in the words of Dos Passos' Cassie, "cazto y puro", if "the eyes of the first parents had not discovered this unseemly commotion"! And if Augustine's father had been overjoyed at the sight of his offspring's erect penis in the bath (it is not strange that Christian historiography hardly mentions this man and only refers to his virtuous wife, Monica), the son was just as depressed at the thought of our first father Adam's erect member.

The Pelagian controversy (411-431)

Was this sexual pessimism not in keeping with the spirit of the times, and did it not reflect the prudishness, perversity and absurdity of the times?

Augustine's contemporary, Pelagius, an Irish monk, convincingly refuted the original sin complex. At first, even Pope Zosimos intervened on Pelagius' behalf; the synod of Diospolis (Palestine) acquitted him in 415 of the charge of heresy, and in 418 nineteen Italian bishops still refused to condemn Pelagius. Finally, Bishop Julian of Eclana (southern Italy) put Augustine in a difficult situation by stating that the sexual impulse had been created by God and was therefore morally irreproachable. Shortly before, the monk Jovinian had won a resounding welcome in Rome by preaching that virginity and fasting did not constitute special merits and that married women were on the same level as widows and virgins.

Jerome and Augustine replied to their opponents, as was usual in such cases, accusing them of heresy and, to show the greater probative force of their thesis, appealed to the State, whereupon, shortly afterwards, Jovinianus was flogged with a whip of lead balls and deported to a Dalmatian island together with his followers. Because of Augustine's zeal, Pelagius also suffered anathema, first in Carthage, then in Rome and finally at the Council of Ephesus (431): although Augustine represented the new ideas and Pelagius the tradition!

Perhaps Western history would have been different if the Church had not bowed to Augustine at that time. It was essentially a discussion about the free will of human beings and whether "this" world can be improved or, as the clergy teaches, because of the sinful condition of the human being one can only hope for a more beautiful Hereafter.

Later, the great controversy also divided Protestants: Calvin and Luther - who flatly denied free will, comparing the human being to a cavalry whose rider is either God or Satan - sided with Augustine, but the upright Müntzer took the side of St. Augustine.

by Pelagius. Zwingli, branded by Luther as a pagan because of his tolerance, rejected the dogma of original sin as anti-evangelical and most of modern Protestant theology has abandoned it: Kari Barth defined it as *contradictio in adjectio*.

Everything about the dogma of original sin has long since been so discredited that even Catholicism does not value it very highly and, for example, one can read - with *imprimatur* - that the classical doctrine of original sin has been "deadlocked for centuries" and "urgently needs the integration of other elements". New stories to replace the old ones...

Augustinian sexual hatred spread from generation to generation. Everything bodily became "fornes peccati", fuel of sin, everything sexual was simply "turpe" and "foedum" indecent and dirty, and placed human beings on the level of animals.

For the early scholastics, the sexual instinct is the height of depravity and every libidinous sensation is sin. Later, St Bonaventure describes the act of love as "corrupt and somewhat stinking". Thomas Aquinas relegates it to "the vilest"; he speaks of "obscene filth" and announces that incontinence "bestialises". And St. Bernard of Clairvaux, for whom we have all been "conceived by sinful desire" and destroyed by "the itch of concupiscence", declares that the human being stinks more than the pig, because of perverse pleasure ([260]).

But before examining moral theology in more detail, let us consider some particular sexual sins.

CHAPTER 24 ONANISM, HOMOSEXUALITY, RELATIONS WITH ANIMALS AND RELATIVES

*Moral people, as they are termed, are simple beasts. I would
sooner have fifty unnatural vices than one unnatural virtue.*

OSCAR WILDE^[261]

1. STICKS AND HOLY WATER AGAINST ONANISM

Catholic clergy have always been concerned with solitary satisfaction. Where coitus is not possible, onanism is common practice, especially in prisons and seminaries: where there is no shouting involved and nothing interrupts the work. "At the Council of Nicaea," says Luther, "it was strictly forbidden for anyone to excite himself,' for, as some were tormented by lust and ardor, they excited themselves frantically in solitude, and so the able and able wanted to remain in ecclesiastical offices and keep their prebends.

This still happens: "onanism was practised to excess", admits a priest in his forties. "Frequent onanism has continued to exist to this day", writes a second. "I have always felt the daily need to masturbate," complains a third. For a fourth, "solitary satisfaction" became "almost an obsession". According to one

modern research conducted among 232 theology students, 90.3% of them masturbated.

But even lay people masturbate frantically: in Europe, according to various researchers, between 85% and 96% of all men do so. In America, according to the Kinsey report, 92% of men had ever masturbated to orgasm; among women between the ages of twenty and fifty, one third of married women and almost half of single women had ever masturbated to orgasm.

Why masturbation is a sin

The prohibition of onanism is so important, surely, because the infraction of the precept awakens feelings of guilt from a very early age and the Church lives, in part, thanks to the remission of that guilt (infra).

Looking back on his puberty, one Catholic recounts that onanism "became the central problem of those years. I experienced my own sexuality as bad and sinful". Another felt "a great sense of guilt because I masturbated so often". A third: "Masturbation: shame in the confessional, relief after absolution, relapse, despair". A fourth had masturbated habitually since the age of ten and had "terrible remorse (because of mortal sin)".

This anguish, which often turns into despair, has been and continues to be fuelled by the Church. "Certain lectures and the first informative talks made me experience my first feelings of guilt", recalls a Catholic. A thirty-four-year-old religion teacher: "Masturbation provoked great remorse in me", reinforced by "a religious text that was described as an 'informative text'". A thirty-nine-year-old monk: "I started masturbating during puberty (...) I was plagued by remorse (...) because parents told us that this was the most serious sin".

Of course, sometimes there are reasonable clergymen, But, even in the exceptional case of that a young try with religious truly

indulgent, the feeling of sin and shame remain. "Despite the fact that confessors and spiritual directors gave the young people of that time a reasonable moral education, with sexual maturity and the first masturbations, strong feelings of guilt appeared, which ended in frequent visits to the confessional"; this is precisely the key to the matter.

In the past, onanism was severely punished and came to be regarded as a kind of "homicide". For Thomas Aquinas - who said that masturbation was worse than fornication - Albert the Great and many other authors, even nocturnal pollutions were a sin: in some convents, they had to be reported in the community chapters. According to our spiritual experts, masturbation causes

"the same ardour and excitement" as sexual intercourse.

Novices were also violently beaten and flogged for involuntary ejaculations. Corporal punishment, applied especially to Catholic adolescents, was a common practice from early Christianity; in the various national churches it became a

A "speciality" - in the words of Auxiliary Bishop Schmitz - designed to atone for impure actions. Today, some moralists roll their eyes: "when he has been polluted, the poor adolescent needs kindness and understanding". But for millennia he was brutally scourged and, as some now admit, beaten to such a degree

"who many times could not bear the despair and the young man ended committing suicide" ⁽¹²⁶²⁾.

Erection Alarm System

Moralists neither hesitated to resort to any form of coercion nor feared ridicule, and the advances of modern technology were zealously harnessed to the benefit of blessed morality. Especially in the 19th century, a type of extra-long shirt buttoned down to below the feet was recommended, the hands of boys were tied, and straitjackets were made that closed at the back, and a

anti-onanism straps that restrained the body and thighs, secured by padlocks. Industry marketed cages in which young men's genitals were locked at night; for maximum protection, the outside of some of these devices were covered with spikes. The pinnacle of such efforts, however, was a box that rang a buzzer in the event of a spontaneous erection.

Churches supported such practices with congenial treatises. Countless informative texts dealt with purity and chlorosis, hysteria and anguish. Onanism leads to madness and suicide, writes the Protestant theologian, prelate and preacher Karpff from Stuttgart - his example is one of many - in the beginning of his *Warning from a friend of the young about the worst enemy of youth or Teachings on secret sins, their consequences, cure and prevention* - in which the

"In many cases, the most serious consequences do not come to light, the impure person is just like other, he has a job, works, enjoys himself, seems completely healthy and happy; but inwardly the spiritual life withers (...)"

"Because of masturbation, a man fell so low that he had to give up his job; then he kept lamenting: that he was dead, that he could do nothing more, that he had lost everything, and so on. He became a burden to himself and to others, and when he was committed to an insane asylum, his condition hardly improved at all. Now his body rots in the ground.

When is desire allowed?

Although, in 1929, the Holy Office still forbade provoking an ejaculation in order to detect a disease by sperm analysis, more recently Christians were allowed to wash, bathe and ride a horse even if it was supposed to cause pollution. It was also permitted to "put an end to a painful itch in verendis", in the private parts, "by rubbing", when such a "painful itch in verendis", in the private parts, "by rubbing", was permitted.

itching was not simply caused by sexual excitement. However: "in case of doubt as to the cause of the , rubbing is permitted" as long as one does not allow oneself to be drawn "into impure pleasure". Nor are nocturnal "contingencies" (supra) any longer an offence, even if "satisfaction has been obtained during sleep". But "direct and voluntary pollution is always a grave sin".

In short, onanism remains for Catholics a perversion, an unnatural vice. In the middle of this century, a certain confessor still shouts at a seventeen year old who accuses himself of having masturbated two or three times: "You wretch, you have crucified Christ! And today, a Catholic (born in 1932) confesses: "in the novitiate, I always wore gloves at night, as the novice master advised me, and tied my fingers with shoelaces so that nothing could "happen"". And although "scientific" moral theology makes certain concessions under the pressure of respectable sciences, the old tactic is maintained in the middle of the 20th century when indoctrinating the poor wretches. Some continue to threaten - long after certain theologians said that "it would be a complete mistake to work in fear and anguish" - and claim that onanism is one of the factors that most adversely affect personality development, infecting the blood and causing neurosis and madness until, finally, "when he least expects it", the onanist "has lost the joy of life" [\[263\]](#). Now, "his body rots in the ground".

2. BONFIRE OR CASTRATION FOR HOMOSEXUALS

The Church has always condemned homosexuality (*sodomie ratione sexus*) as an abominable perversity. But is it so unnatural? Is it not the expression of our fundamentally bisexual nature? Is it not a phenomenon that also often appears among animals, especially primates, who are the kings of the animal kingdom? Among certain monkeys, some males masturbate while others masturbate while others masturbate while others masturbate while others masturbate.

penetrate. And in all higher animal species, when heterosexual mates are unavailable or impotent, individuals indulge in homosexuality. Dogs copulate *per anum*, cows mount each other, she-wolves lick each other's vagina; hens, geese, ducks and female pheasants often have lesbian relations. Homoerotic contacts between different animal species are also not uncommon.

According to Goethe, a staunch anti-clerical, homosexuality is as old as mankind itself and therefore natural.

In Greece, paedophilia has dominated all manifestations of culture since the earliest times: figurative arts, epic, lyric and tragedy, described by some ancient critics as a "breeding ground for paedophilia". We find it in all kinds of historical, scientific and philosophical books, and mythology is full of paedophilic legends; moreover, at first, the word "pedagogue" designated the man who induced boys to engage in homosexual contact.

Lycurgus, the (legendary) lawgiver of Sparta, states in his laws that you cannot be a competent citizen if you do not have a friend in bed. Solon and his successors recommend homosexuality to the young. Plato knows of "no greater joy for an adolescent than to be loved by an honest man, nor greater joy for him than to have a lover". In Thebes, homosexuality was standard practice for a powerful elite regiment of three hundred men, and in Crete and Sparta it was part of the education young warriors received from their superiors. The list of famous homosexuals of Greek antiquity includes kings like Hieron of Syracuse or Philip of Macedon, strategists like Alexander the Great, Epaminondas or Pausanias, legislators like Minos and Solon, philosophers like Socrates, Plato or Aristotle and many others. However, the most voluminous histories of the culture of classical antiquity at the end of the 19th century still made little or no mention of homosexuality. And in today's schools, the subject is still not discussed.

Sin that cries out to heaven

With the Hebrews and Christians, a ruthless hunt for homosexuals began, although, at certain times, Judaism had some temples where male homosexual prostitution was practised, as was the case in other Asian cults. Nevertheless, the Old Testament imposed the death penalty for homosexuality: 'if anyone lies with a man as with a woman, both have committed an abomination (*toúebhah*) and must be put to death'.

Later, Paul condemned the homoerotic love of men and (in one passage) that of women. Drawing on him or quoting the Old Testament, most other Church Fathers also condemn homosexuality, notably St Augustine, the vehement St John Chrysostom and the even more rabid Peter Damian, who believes that homosexuality is worse than bestiality. Later, St. Peter Canisius (1521-1597) became the most virulent opponent of homosexuality, including homoerotic relationships among the "peccata in coelum clamantia", the sins crying out to Heaven, a hitherto little-known category whose special importance he took care to emphasise.

Christian society persecuted "vice" for fifteen hundred years with increasingly severe punishments; theologians condemned it with constantly renewed expressions: "nefanda libido", "nefarium", "monstrosa Venus", "diabolica luxuria", "horrendus scelus", "execrabile", and so on.

At the beginning of the 4th century, the Synod of Elvira deprives the "child rapists", even in danger of death. St. Basil orders a fifteen-year penance for homosexuals; theology in the early Middle Ages usually favoured ten years. The 16th Synod of Toledo decrees in 694 that a sodomite should be "excluded from all contact with Christians, flogged with rods, ignominiously shaved and banished". The Synod of Nablus (1120), which blamed natural disasters and Saracen attacks on the unbridled way of life of the believers, demanded that whoever had

freely consented to a homosexual act (active or passive) to die at the stake. The papal bull *Cum primum* in 1566 prescribed the handing over of all homosexuals to the state, which undoubtedly entailed execution.

Death penalty under secular law

Pagan emperors had not frowned upon homosexuality. But Constantine and his successors on the throne condemned it to the stake.

The old Visigothic Code, drawn up between the 6th and 7th centuries and contaminated with Christian ideas, established that homosexual relations were to be punished, in addition to certain confiscations, with castration; in a later reworking of it, the *Siete Partidas*, the death penalty was prescribed. As the text states, because of this terrible sin "of which some are slaves. God Our Lord brings down upon the earth famine and pestilence and earthquakes and an infinity of evils that no human being could detail".

Homosexual love was long considered a capital crime in the West. The penal laws of Charles I ("secular head of Christendom and protector of the Church"), which were still in force in many places at the end of the 18th century, punished sexual relations between man and man or woman and woman by burning.

In England, where such relationships were widespread, those who practised them were hanged or stoned until the 19th century. The maximum punishment was later ordered to be life imprisonment, but before that the offender was abandoned to "the wholesome feelings of the populace" by being put in the pillory, where mud, excrement and rotten dogs, cats and fish were thrown at him for hours; the mere attempt to commit this "horrible crime" was punishable by up to ten years' imprisonment ^[264]. In England, it was not until 1957 that homosexuality was between adults was decriminalised.

Hitler and Christian morality

In Germany, the Führer tightened the notorious Article 175 of the Penal Code with Article 175a, under which around 24,000 men were tried for homosexuality between 1937 and 1939.

For homosexuals, however, the Nazi empire lasted in the Federal Republic until 1969. Until then, they lived under the threat of Hitler's hardened paragraph; an innocent and harmless minority persecuted as if they were criminals and their lives were ruined " of private acts between two consenting, mutually independent adults of sound mind, which do not harm anyone and do not cause any harm to the state".

The real criminal was indeed the Christian morality behind it all. In a ruling not so long ago on the constitutionality of Article 175, the Federal Constitutional Court not only referred to Article 116 of the Constitution of 1848, but went so far as to invoke Leviticus 18, 22 and 20, 13!

Obviously, in the Catholic dictatorships of Spain and Portugal, homosexuals continued to be subjected to the threat of punishment, which in Spain could, from the 1950s onwards, extend to internment. And, although research in the Americas on seventy-six indigenous, ungendered cultures found that forty-nine of them had maintained a permissive attitude towards homosexuality, US sex law was still, at the time of the Kinsey report, a kind of mirror image of medieval ecclesiastical morality, and some or all homosexual practices were criminalised throughout the country - in certain states, as were the most violent crimes. In the R. D. A., the paragraph on the subject was deleted; only the measures for the protection of minors were retained. In Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia homosexuality was also decriminalised.

However, the Catholic attitude towards homoerotic love has not changed fundamentally, as the works of moral theology devoted to the subject show. The French priest Marc Oraison's book *Christian Life and Sexual Matters*, which rejected prison sentences for homosexuals, is a good example of this.

homosexuals, was included in the Index. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* - who sent three groups to concentration camps: political opponents, Jews and homosexuals - was not included in the Index; and yet the Church had persecuted for two millennia those he had persecuted for twelve years!

Condemnations against lesbian love were generally milder; intensively practised since the Renaissance, especially in Italy (as evidenced by the expression "donna con donna" which was widely used at the time), it was probably the result of the fact that contacts between man and woman were more closely guarded and therefore carried greater risks. However, homosexuality has been encouraged, at least in recent centuries, by the Christian educational system and its tendency to postpone contact between the sexes as much as possible.

3. DEATH TO SODOMITES AND LUSTFUL ANIMALS

Bestiality (*sodomy ratione generis*), to which so many pious Old Testament characters were fond of, appears constantly in synods and penitentials. The Synod of Ancyra (314) already prescribes for "those who have indulged in lust with irrational animals or continue to do so" a penalty of fifteen years if they are under twenty, twenty-five if they are over twenty and married, and life imprisonment if they are married and over fifty. Several medieval penitentials impose similar punishments. If a woman allowed herself to be seduced by a pack animal (donkey) she could be sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. On the other hand, the Church ordered lustful animals to be killed and thrown to the dogs.

In the Christian West, animal lovers have favoured goats, calves, cows and bitches; turkeys, hens and geese have also been used for such acts, sometimes resulting in scenes of tremendous cruelty. These processes, in which the "complicity" of the animal was sometimes explored, have

continued to be celebrated well into the modern age, sometimes distinguished by the display of all manner of delicacies. Thus, on 2 June 1662, in New Jersey, a prisoner was forced, before his execution, to contemplate the two calves, three sheep and two sows to which he had been so closely attached.

A certificate of good conduct for a donkey

A certain Jacques Ferron was hanged in Vanvres in the middle of the 18th century because of his great love for a donkey. However, the animal was famously acquitted on the grounds that he had not participated voluntarily but had been raped: in other words, that he had not intended to sin. The prioress of the local convent of nuns and several citizens of the town issued the victim with a certificate of good conduct so impeccable that there was not the slightest doubt about his reputation, his reputation and his moral integrity. The statement they signed said that they had known "the said donkey for four years and that she had always shown her virtue, both in the stable and on the roads, and had never caused any scandal". The document was said to have had a decisive influence on the court's verdict.

Of course, people were not always so considerate, as is shown by the fate of those lapdogs that were known at the time as "lickers" because they not only lay on their mistresses' laps, but took possession of them, and often tried to demonstrate this in such an obvious way that, in 1771, the courts ordered the confiscation and burning of all the males of this breed in the Paris region.

By contrast, in the Baltic provinces sodomy was always relatively unpunished, perhaps because the peasants there had a special need for animals, or perhaps because the Eastern Church was never as cruel as the Western one. Be that as it may, it seems that mares, cows and goats were not safe in those lands and were ridden even by happily married men. On one occasion a man was caught with a goat immediately after he had satisfied his

woman. Convicts had to undergo ecclesiastical penances and were flogged; most received "forty pairs of spankings" but were occasionally sentenced to years of hard labour or banished to Siberia, in some cases for life. One animal lover, questioned by a pope about how he had fallen into the sin, replied: "I saw a sodomite publicly punished: then I thought that a vice for which a man endures so much pain (...), The stimulation and pleasures of that kind of vice, I thought, must compensate for the pains".

Moreover, it is significant that the Christian Church extended to the Jews a law against bestiality which it had taken... from the Jews themselves. For sexual intercourse between a Christian and a Jewess was judged in the same way as sexual intercourse with an animal! Sometimes also relations with Turks and Saracens, "since such persons, in the eyes of the law and of our most holy faith, are in no way different from animals" (!) Consequently, Christians convicted of having sexual relations with non-Christians were often treated as sodomites: they were killed together with their partner ^[266].

4. ROPE AND SWORD FOR INCEST UNTIL THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Like homosexuality and bestiality, sexual intercourse with close relatives has been treated as a crime in Christianity. However, incest (which probably comes from "incestus": impure, unclean) is, in fact, completely natural. Animals practise it without inhibition, and mankind has known about it since time immemorial, since it came into being because of it. Gods and goddesses loved each other incestuously, which should be enough to sanction the matter, as Lucian acknowledged in the 2nd century. All the great ancient cultures permitted incest and even made it a duty of their rulers. It was common in Sumer and Davidic India, in southeast China and Siam, in Ceylon, Java, Bali and Hawaii.

In Rome, incest was already severely punished in pre-Christian times, although there were various cases among the emperors. Christian rulers, on the other hand, were quick to impose sentences of death by burning and confiscation on those guilty of this crime, and it is quite clear that they increased the penalties.

The Church punished this "vice" with even higher penalties. Thus, for example, in the early Middle Ages the penalty for sleeping with one's own mother was in most cases fifteen years, exceptionally twenty-one, and for sleeping with one's daughter or sister fifteen years or sometimes twelve. The Poenitentiale Arundel considered the case of incest with the godmother (commater), for which he fixed a penance of fifteen years. According to Catholic morality, incest is a sin because it "violates the respect due to relatives": a completely gratuitous conclusion. For one owes respect not only to one's own relatives, one's own sister or daughter, but also one's own husband and wife. And if sexual intercourse does not violate the respect between spouses, why should it violate the respect between brother and sister? Much more evident is the later warning: "that if there were not the deterrent of a special law, occasions of sin would arise more easily because of the close relationship between related persons".

For the rest, the clergy themselves were not intimidated. In any , it seems that in the Middle Ages the number of laymen accused of incest was lower than that of clerics under this accusation, although the latter were punished less severely. Pope John XII was also accused of having had "ignominious relations" with his mother and sister (supra). John XXIII (Baldassare Cossa) confessed his before the Council of Constance and on many other occasions. Alexander VI fornicated with his daughter Lucrezia (supra). And Cardinal Richelieu maintained with his illegitimate daughter, Madame Rousse, that form of incestuous relations which Sade describes as the height of voluptuousness.

The ecclesiastical taboo on incest has remained in force to this day.

The Reformation, or at least its most extreme manifestations, Puritanism and Calvinism, called for an aggravation of the penalties for incest. In , death - in most cases by the sword - was the rule rather than the exception in the 16th and 17th centuries. In France at that time the punishment for incest was hanging. In Sweden, the death penalty was retained until 1864. Surprisingly, among those executed were many mothers, even though incest between mother and child is very rare. Apparently, this relationship seemed so criminal that it was thought that people could be put to death on the basis of mere suspicion. In Scotland, incest was punishable by beheading - as an offence against religious order - until 1887 and by life imprisonment thereafter.

Sexual relations between close relatives are still criminalised in most states, often with penalties so absurdly high as to suggest some deep psychological trauma in the legislator.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, incest is punishable by imprisonment for several years or fines. In the USA, penalties range from five hundred dollars or, at most, six months' imprisonment in Virginia, to fifty years' imprisonment in California, with intermediate cases, such as Louisiana, carrying sentences of ten to twenty years. In contrast, sexual contact between siblings is decriminalised in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and some states such as Luxembourg, Japan and Turkey do not punish incest in any form ^[267].

Scientific" argumentation is also irrelevant.

... and, moreover, mere theology in disguise. "The pretext that sexual intercourse between relatives is criminalised because it results in "degenerate" offspring is in total contradiction with the experimental results of geneticists, who reproduce hundreds of generations of

laboratory animals uniting the offspring of a single couple without the slightest degeneration being observed. Peoples such as the Jews, who were confined to their ghettos and forced into intermarriage between relatives, have long disproved the myth of degeneration. A high degree of intelligence, a minimal incidence of mental illness and enormous vitality have been precisely the results of a high rate of inbreeding. The health of children does not depend on the parent's parentage, but on the genetic contribution they pass on. If this is good, inbreeding can only improve it. If it is bad, inbreeding will make it worse.

How do sexual relations with close relatives and animals or other deviations come about? Well, many of these surprising behaviours - which Archbishop Grober ("with the recommendation of the entire German episcopate") is pleased to see "persecuted and stigmatised by the disciplinary regime of Church and State" in 1937 - are the result of Christian morality itself. Evidence of this is provided by an exhibitionist undergoing psychoanalytic treatment who confesses that he took pleasure in the gaze of women, while "direct bodily contact" with them seemed to him "coarse, bestial and sinful"; or a patient with necrophiliac fantasies, who declares: "if you do something like that with a living person, - he means sexual contact - then there are accusing eyes watching you; but a dead person with whom you do something like that does not look at you". It is also indicative that, out of a hundred or so cases of criminal incest investigated, most of the fathers who had abused their daughters had done so under pressure from the more or less absolute sexual rejection of their wives.

Sexual "anomalies" are, , the result of a morality which prohibits sexual contact before and outside marriage and even limits the marital relationship itself; in a word, it defiles what is most intimate and natural and calls it sin. Hence, nature necessarily looks for other ways out. Animals that cannot have heterosexual relations also become "abnormal"; they indulge in homosexuality, they masturbate: a lap dog may copulate with a goose.

Of course, some anomalies are also born of instinct, curiosity, desire for unusual pleasures; they need not all be manifestations of protest or consequences of repression. However, it seems that in some primitive peoples "perversions" did not exist before the Europeans arrived and the Christian missionaries imposed the proscription of pleasure ^[268].

Many of the "peculiarities" were undoubtedly directly disseminated by the confessional praxis of Catholic moralists.

CHAPTER 25 SOME MORAL DETAILS THEOLOGICAL OR "... THIS LURID SUBJECT".

Art. 100. Chastity.

Preliminary warning. Like St. Alphonsus, we exhort students of theology not to study this subject (arts. 100 ff.) until it becomes necessary in the immediate preparation for the administration of the sacrament of penance. Catholic moral theology, like medicine or jurisprudence, cannot avoid the duty of dealing with this difficult subject, naturally, with all the moral gravity that corresponds to sacred science.

GÓPFERT, Catholic theologian^[269]

We must question the confessor in detail.

DEBREYNE, Catholic theologian^[270]

1. DELECTATIO MOROSA IN THE PAST

No religion in the world has debated sexual intimacies as Catholicism has. The moral theologian is the believer who most disregards the biblical dictum: "fornication and all forms of impurity, let them not even be mentioned among you, as is fitting for the saints".

Significantly, there is a theological-moral concept, the "delectatio morosa", which expresses that sultry snooping of the casuists, that circumstantial recreation, that bitter solace resulting in a kind of mental masturbation. The moralists stress that the *delectatio morosa* of others "is always sin", but they are more generous with themselves, since it can be "permitted, and even a duty, to think of sin in order to acquire the necessary knowledge; as, for example, in the case of doctors and confessors".

Many theologians took a keen interest in this knowledge; they reflected on sin for century after century, out of a sense of duty, more and more intensively, demonstrating an ever-increasing knowledge and wisdom.

On "the practical application of ecclesiastical norms".

A cursory glance at any of the penitentials of the early Middle Ages is revealing. From the 7th century onwards, all priests were required to possess and know these writings. But they had to be hidden from the laity, as they were considered "secret books"; today they remain one of the "most outstanding sources" of canon law, "documents on the practical application of ecclesiastical norms".

We find in these texts questions such as: if someone has wanted to copulate, but was not able to; if he desired his neighbour's wife, but could not sin; if he enjoyed a voluptuous odour (*libidinoso odore*); if he had a pollution from a conversation or an exciting look, or while sleeping in the church. Spiritual investigators inquire whether a kiss has provoked ejaculation or not; whether one has had intercourse with a sterile woman, a pregnant woman or a menstruating woman; whether, while embracing the woman, she had an orgasm; whether the emission of sperm was repeated two, three or more times. They scrutinise whether copulation with draught animals has taken place or whether a mother has tried to make advances with her young son or a boy with the maid, and to what extent they succeeded; whether young men fornicate with each other or with

animals; whether they satisfy each other with their hands or between their thighs; whether men do it; whether they do it once or many times, and so on and so forth.

And all this and much more had to be atoned for: not only (amorous) acts but also "illegitimate" desires and even dreams.

In the case of the religious, the moralists also imagined all possible combinations: whether a bishop benefits a married woman or virgin; whether the prelate gets mentally excited at night (*cogitavit fantasiam luxoriae*) and then ejaculates during sleep; whether he wastes his semen when a woman kisses him or with simple erotic fantasies (*per cogitationem*); whether he masturbates (*si manu semen excusserit; si manu tetigerit*) or whether he ejaculates in church due to excitement^[271].

The German book of ecclesiastical penances or copulating with a wooden cue

The Poenitentiale Ecclesiarum Germanicae, which is replete with inquisitorial enquiries, asks almost constantly: "have you slept with your wife's sister", have you committed lewd acts with two sisters? with your brother's wife? with your father? with your uncle? with your son's wife? with your mother? with your maternal aunt? with your paternal aunt? have you sinned against nature, that is, have you copulated with men or with beasts; with a mare, a cow, a donkey or some other beast?".

The German Book of Ecclesiastical Penance, apart from inquiring whether anyone has planted his member (*virgam*) in the ass of another man or his brother in the style of the Sodomites and whether he has done it two or three times, or does it habitually, asks: "Have you fornicated, as some do, by taking the member of the other in your hand and the other your own and moving them both so that you spilled the sperm as a result of the delight?" "Have you fornicated, as some do, by penetrating with your member into the hollow of a wooden block (*lignum perforatum*) or a similar object, until, by this movement, your sperm spilled out? And so on and so forth.

All of these situations were assessed by the experts. For example, a penance of twenty days on bread and water for sexual intercourse with wooden blocks and similar delicacies; or penances in *feriae legitimae* -that is, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays- for fifteen years in the case of penetrating one's own brother from behind, *coitus per anum*.

Exceptions and disputes

Although the older moralists had already carefully examined the various forms of vice, discussing and analysing them in all their forms, their better-educated successors reproached them for lacking original ideas and for not having considered certain exceptions. For example, they pondered the following: if there were only a few human beings left, would it be permitted to fornicate with a cousin or with the wife of an impotent man? (Some authors approved of this, while the more prudent preferred to wait for a command from God).

Another controversial question was whether the degree of pleasure determines the gravity of the sin. Thus, for St. Jerome the crime is equally great whether the woman one has slept with is beautiful or ugly, but Huguccio states that "the sin is greater with a beautiful woman because, in this case, the pleasure and enjoyment are greater". Peter the Chantre judges the subject in a similar way. On the other hand, Alan of Lille is of the opinion that "he who fornicates with a beautiful woman sins less" because he is coerced by beauty, and "the greater the coercion, the lesser the sin". The problem is further complicated by the fact that, as the early Christians already knew, the ugly woman has the disadvantage (rather the advantage, of course) that men, and especially religious men, are "more prone to sin" when they are "free from suspicion, and pleasure has no regard for ugliness, for the Devil turns ugliness into beauty".

Another question connected with this is whether extramarital intercourse is more immoral in a young man or in an old man. If it is accepted that the young man feels more pleasure, then, according to the joy theory, he sins more. But if it is assumed that he is driven by a stronger instinct, then it is the old man who sins more.

The more willing fornicator is the greater offender, because the one who fornicates more willingly is worse than the one who enjoys it more.

Theologians in the middle centuries of the Middle Ages discuss the subject of people who, because of their corpulence, can only copulate with their bodies.

"The Catholic sages go so far as to ask: if a dead man, like Lazarus, were to be raised from the dead, what would he do if he were raised from the dead like Lazarus? Wise Catholics go so far as to ask: if a dead man, like Lazarus, should be raised from the dead,

Could he claim his wife back if she had remarried? Master Martinus, an intrepid thinker, replies that it is not advisable to "lay down definite rules for such infrequent cases" (1)^[272].

The "narrow woman"

The question of whether eunuchs can marry (and whether they can marry without one testicle, or without both, and whether the erect virga is sufficient, even if there is no ejaculation, and so on) and that of the "narrow woman" which constituted a diriment impediment, were also studied in depth.

According to general opinion, the constriction was to be removed, not only surgically, but also by copulation with a physically suitable man. If the woman, after separation from her first husband, succeeded in copulating in the second marriage and, as a result of defloration, was now able to copulate with the former husband, she was to return to him. If necessary, she would have to agree to a new marriage request from her first husband. Suspicious theologians only gave him up to three chances. In time it was realised that if a woman copulated with one, she could also copulate with others, so that some women pretended to be "narrow" simply to use the possibilities offered by the moral experts to their advantage.

Alphonsus Liguori or "wise moderation".

, moral theology only truly flourished in the 20th century. XVIIIth and, above all, in the XIXth. As one of its representatives rightly says, it developed "at its own pace". In his *Moral Resolutions*, the theologian Antoninus Diana single-handedly solved twenty thousand "cases of conscience". And the 18th century - in which the magisterial Hunolt of Trier Cathedral declared that chastity was the "queen of virtues" and incontinence worse even than "disavowing the faith" - gave the Church a classical moral theologian, if not *the classical one* par excellence. St. Alphonsus Liguori, awarded the Church's highest title and, moreover, that of "wise moderation".

The Wise Moderator was able to draw on the works of eight hundred and fifty authors for his studies, thus finding "the right middle ground between the two extreme attempts at a solution". In his *Theologia Moralis*, which appeared between 1753 and 1755 and went through more than seventy editions, he investigates the sinfulness and punishability of conjugal and extra-marital kisses with and without ejaculation; of looking at the "dishonourable parts of the body" (*partium inhonestarum*) of another person from up close and from far away; or of the involuntary pollutions of doctors who have to touch genital organs. It establishes "the most suitable position for the sperm spilled by the man to be received in the female sexual organ"; it deals with coitus sitting, standing, from the side or from behind, in the style of animals, or with the man below and the woman above, or with coitus in which the man empties himself "outside the woman's natural receptacle" (*extra vas naturale*). He discusses fornication with a woman's corpse (*coire cum foemina mortua*); he examines whether it is a mortal sin to refuse a fourth coitus in a single night or to refuse one who attempts it for the fifth time in a month.

Who was this Catholic genius?

Born in 1696 in the palace of Marianella, near Naples, Alphonsus Liguori interrupted a brilliant career as a lawyer after losing an important trial. He resolutely renounced the vile world and founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Order of the Redemptorists. He wore a simple horsehair sackcloth, threw on his

He ate bitter herbs, slept directly on the ground, even on the coldest nights, had sharp chains for hands and feet, a cross covered with nails for his chest and back and, for a long time, spent hours in a half-ruined grotto whipping himself with a spiked whip until he was bloody, at which point Saint Mary, virginal and beautiful, used to appear to him.

For this man, whose "sense of reality" is still praised by some, even though he investigated all the possible variants of sexual relations with women from a purely theoretical point of view... kept his distance from the female sex *in praxi*, or at least avoided being alone with any woman. "When he was a bishop," reports the official biography of the order, "he gave audience to women only in the presence of a servant, except on one occasion when he received an old woman by seating her at one end of a long bench and placing himself with his back to her at the other end. When he confirmed women and had to give the kiss on the cheek prescribed by the Church, he never touched the naked face of the confirmed woman, but only her headress.

At the age of eighty-eight he suffered a mental disorder. As his biographer writes: "Scruples of conscience, deep darkness of soul, doubts and a spiritual suffering greater than all the bodily pains he had endured, assailed his soul with great impetus and had him paralysed to the ground. His understanding, at other times so sharp and penetrating, was suddenly enveloped in such darkness that he no longer knew right from wrong. Everything he wanted to do seemed to him to be forbidden; he saw sin or the danger of sin everywhere, and he was constantly tormented by the doubt whether he was still in a state of grace. In addition, he was assailed by some other temptations among the most dangerous. Doubts of faith, pride, despair, recklessness, all the sins fought against each other in the saint's imagination and senses. He even felt the sting of the flesh to such an extent that he would sobbingly exclaim: "Alas, I am eighty-eight years old and the fire of my youth is not yet extinguished"!

, six volumes of *Theologia Moralis*.

In 1803, a Vatican decree announced that, "after a mature investigation, nothing has been found in the works of the venerable bishop that could in any way be to the spiritual detriment of believers"; Pius VII beatified him in 1816; Gregory XVI canonised him in 1839; Pius IX declared him a Doctor of the Church in 1871; and in 1950 Pius XII made him the patron saint of confessors and moralists.

Such a model obliges. And thus we see that the moral theology of the XXth century still deals intensively with the most diverse sexual crimes, assessing the sins between father and daughter, mother and son, stepfather and stepdaughter, son-in-law and mother-in-law, father-in-law and daughter-in-law, guardian and ward, the sins "of the priest with his parishioner", those that "the priest commits with the penitent", those that "the priest commits with the penitent", those that "the priest commits with the penitent", those that "the priest commits with the penitent", and those that "the priest commits with the penitent".

"committed by or with someone of the religious state" or those committed by someone of the religious state with another religious person, and so on and so forth ^[273].

Lust from the cemetery to the belfry

The question arises as to "when is the sacred place contaminated", and it should be noted that "church and cemetery are only contaminated when these impudent actions are public and notorious" (supra). Neither "the sacristy, when there is an adjoining building of this type, nor the church storeroom, nor the crypt, nor the tower" belong to the sacred place, so they are not affected by a "local sacrilege". In other words, in order not to be inhumane, they leave a series of reserved areas as shelters in the very surroundings of the church and even inside it: from the basement to the top of the tower. (In the case of notorious dishonest acts in the church or in the cemetery, many theologians demand that the bishop erase the sin, while, if the fault has been committed in secret, the simple absolution - with *aqua exorchatata*: water blessed by the bishop - of the priest is sufficient, because they know that, otherwise, the bishops would have to set out daily for such purifications).

What happens when a married couple copulates in the house of God "who have probably been there for five, ten, fifteen days, or a

What happens when "sacred things, such as sacraments, vessels or habits" are taken or used to sin?

Is it not a grave sin, theologians reflect, when one "unnecessarily prolongs a conversation with a girl towards whom one has an inordinate inclination anyway"? Or "when a woman artificially lifts up her breasts to please or attract men"? Or when "persons of the same sex glance at each other while swimming together, or in the bath, or in some other circumstance"?

The honest parts of the body, the less honest parts and the dishonest parts of the

Looking at one's own body also entails risks, especially the "less honest parts, such as a woman's breasts, arms and thighs", which is not to say that looking at a man's chest, arms and thighs is not equally dishonest, but that looking at a woman's is even more so. In any case, in reference to "lewd or dishonest actions", well-known Catholic manuals of our century differentiate very seriously between: 1) the dishonest parts of the body (*partes inhonestae, turpes, obscenae*), that is, the sexual organs and the parts close to them, 2) the less honest parts (*partes minus honestae*): the chest, arms and thighs and 3) the honest parts (*honestae*), which are usually not covered by clothes, for example, the face and hands. So, the closer to the genitals, the "less honest"; and finally, the "sexual organs and the parts that are very close to them" are totally dishonest.

Therefore, looking at the "dishonest parts" of one's own body is only permitted if it does not involve sexual pleasure. If one looks at them out of curiosity or frivolity, it is a forgivable sin. But if one

"keeps one of those looks for some time and for no reason (!), it is likely to become a mortal sin". Kissing and touching motivated by sexual pleasure are mortal sins, no matter how light they are, and no matter whether they are performed on honest or less honest parts (...).

Lightly brushing a woman's hand can be a mortal sin if it happens for an impure purpose". "Kisses *in partibus minus honestis* (...) are, as a rule, mortal sins" as they are either "due to pure delight or, at least, cause strong excitement".

And thank goodness that the human body - "the greatest work of art of creation" as the Jesuits inform us - has, even for the most rigorous, a couple of decorous parts. The face and hands are dematerialised, spiritualised (supra). The soul does not animate "all parts in the same way". Below the head, apart from the hands, the body becomes a murky, sad and bestial thing. The soul, unfortunately, can no longer have "any other ennobling or spiritualising influence on it. The body is flesh and differs from the animals only in form" ^[274]. *Hoc habet.*

"Tickling" children or pollution in medical studies

What is the gravity of sin, theologians continue to cogitate, "When looking at naked children", when looking at the "dishonest parts of a person of the other sex", or when "looking at such things through a net or a thin, transparent sheath"? And when children "who are still sexually immature" wear clothes that "destroy the sense of modesty and the dykes of chastity"? For "many children and adults are scandalised by this".

An instruction for confessors of young girls "who do not know or dare not declare their sins against chastity" points out, with regard to masturbation, the following transgressions or attempts "which young girls habitually commit in this area": light caresses of the external sexual organs with the surface of the hand; the introduction of a finger into the vagina; or the introduction of a rounded piece of wood, an object in the shape of the male member or other similar objects. But it is also considered "customary in this area" for "a young girl to press her sexual parts against a table leg or against the corner of a wall

to the point of lubrication"; to "rub his genitals on the chair he sits on"; to "sit on the floor and press his sexual organs with the tip of his foot" etc. Who can be surprised that "in some quarters" there is "an antipathy bordering on the unhealthy against confessional interrogations"?

Moralists argue about the seriousness of "maids and wet nurses touching momentarily and out of curiosity the sexual parts of children while washing or dressing them"; or "touching the sexual organs of infants to soothe them". Such conscienceless maids engaged in "tickling" infant genitals constantly troubled the servants of God. Hence devout parents hastened to hire frigid persons, whom they allowed to wear only "decent" clothes, forbidding them to fornicate during nursing periods, since, as Cardinal de Bemis already knew in the 18th century "from his own experience", the maids transmitted their sensuality to the children with the milk they gave them and sinned by "tickling them and rubbing their sexual parts".

What is the extent of the sin when a "eunuch tries to get laid" by palpating his sexual parts? And when someone fornicates "with a dead woman"? On the other hand, "means of transport, which nowadays are often crowded with people", are "fraught with danger", since there are "sensual people who try to satisfy their sensuality through intimate and anonymous contact with strangers". So watch out for this too!

And do not parents put the spiritual health of their children in great danger when they "speak before them of impure things (...) which the latter, years later, experience all too soon"? Ah, the enlightened Catholics! They accuse of grave sin whoever speaks "about means to prevent procreation", "especially when he does so before young people of different sexes; for young people and women (!) are generally weak and it is easy to incite them to lust". Bathing naked also deprives "children and especially young girls (!) of all sense of modesty".

And don't those who read obscene books and "often have pollutions as a result of such readings" sin very seriously, say the specialists? What happens "when young people look up dishonest words in dictionaries or

And when can ejaculation be foreseen "as a result of application to the study of medicine or anatomy, but is not premeditated"?

Reading so-called "bad" books - "even if they are not completely bad" - is usually a grave sin. If they are only "a little inconvenient" it is a venial sin which, of course, when read "for evil purposes" can become mortal. Married people are also "seriously" warned against literature which

"describes the intimacies of the marriage in the greatest detail and without any respect" [\[275\]](#).

The need for censorship and the filthiness of the classics

For centuries literature has been guarded according to such principles. It was a prince of the Church, the Archbishop of Mainz, Berthold of Henneberg, who created the first censorship institution in 1486. The Reich Censorship Regulation of the early 16th century was also passed on the initiative of the Church, and during its long life it was certainly more concerned with statements about the Church and religion than with "moral questions".

The situation remained essentially unchanged until very recently. Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) decreed in his constitution *Officiorum ac minorum*: "Books which treat, relate or teach by system filthy and immoral things are strictly forbidden (...) Books by ancient and modern writers which pass for classics and are not free from all filth (!) are authorised in consideration of the elegance and purity of language, though only those whose office and magisterium require such an exception. But only carefully purged editions will come into the hands of children and young people, and they will be instructed only on the basis of them".

In the battle against "immoral literature" in the Federal Republic of Germany, these principles are still being followed. Thus, in our country, an official Church institution has promoted and prepared a

Law on the dissemination of writings dangerous to minors, which was followed by thousands of prosecutions, some even against works of some aesthetic relevance.

In 1948 the complete works of Sartre were still included in the Index of Prohibited Books - created by Paul IV in 1557 - and in 1952 those of Gide. In the second half of the 20th century, Ranke and Gregorovius, Heine and Flaubert, Montaigne's *Essais*, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Pascal's *Pensees* and *Provinciales*, and books by Spinoza, Lessing and many others still appeared.

On the diabolical character of cinema and theatre

Obscene theatre was still condemned by Catholics on the threshold of the 20th century... almost as it was in antiquity. The 5th century Synod of Arles had already pronounced anathema against any Christian who accepted a theatrical role. Subsequently, censorship has cut out single words, phrases, scenes and whole plays whenever secular and religious potentates have been offended. (The Prussian High Court did not hesitate to ban in 1903 the *Mary Magdalene* of the Nobel Prize winner Heyse on the grounds of erotic instincts, "the basest and most reprehensible erotic instincts of the human being").

Nevertheless, almost everyone involved in the performance of "dishonest" works was sinning (that is "of course"): writers, performers, impresarios, audiences and those who were supposed to prohibit them and did not do so. The ballets were also "almost always a scandal for the spectators" ("I would never absolve one of these" refers to a ballet dancer, "if she had not first abandoned her occupation"), "One can be more lenient with those who have a more distant intervention; for example, those who sweep the theatre or those who construct the building". It's hard to believe: in the middle of the century

xx the cleaning ladies and bricklayers bore their share of the blame! On the contrary: "policemen and soldiers are free from sin (...)". Of course, how could the military be guilty in the eyes of the Church!

When a cinema opens, "everything possible must be done to ensure that it is in the hands of a responsible Christian". Cinema, radio and television must be "Christianised". Cinema owners who show "bad" films sin. So do those who rent the hall, even if they have no influence on the programme. They "sin" even those who listen to the radio or watch television "without any criteria".

A young man admits to a Jesuit: "One evening, in an exceptional way, I went with some friends into a theatre and thus (*ipso facto*) all my good intentions were ruined". Another confesses: "Since I stopped going to the cinema, I stopped sinning" ^[276].

Looking "naked" and other perversities

"Painters and sculptors who produce or exhibit obscene works (i.e. works in which the defiled parts appear naked or only lightly covered) or those who exhibit such works in their homes public view, sin gravely". Those who look at such images - which at one point are described as "nudes and works of art" - also sin gravely "unless they do so for a short period of time or from a long distance or if the image has lost its colours over the years" (!). In general, although with some nuances, the same can be said of statues, since these, not being painted, are less inciting than paintings. "It goes without saying that the fact that a painting or statue is exhibited in public museums is not a sufficient reason to legitimise its contemplation". Such things are written with ecclesiastical licence.

Bouvier, an expert Catholic moralist, had discussed in 1876 the case of masturbation in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary and even several decades later moral theology was still dealing with sexual intercourse with "a statue" (*coitus cum statua*): of course, Christians in the Middle Ages had already had a similar deal with a wooden doll (*supra*) and according to the same

S. John Chrysostom, "many ascetics" of antiquity had a suspicious inclination "for stones and statues".

How (not) to sin with models and animals

Artists and art students who see in a gallery "dubious nudes and truly indecorous works alongside decent works of art (!)" should "distance themselves further from any immediate occasion of sin by praying, renewing their good resolutions and being careful with their gaze (!)". In any case, "unless there is a good reason", such exhibitions, which are "an immediate occasion of sin and often a scandal to others", are to be avoided.

Nor is it "in itself permissible" for young girls and adult women to serve as models if only their genitals are covered. On the other hand, they do not sin when drawing them is necessary for the training of artists.

"But, of course, they should not indulge in obscene posturing and should try to ward off danger by praying and renewing their good intentions.

When copulating, animals also dangerous for Catholics:

"(...) there is no doubt that chaste eyes will avoid such a gratuitous vision". But, in the case of cattle breeding, it is still recommended in the 19th and 20th centuries that, "when the billy goat rides the goat or the bull rides the cow" - Hail Mary Most Pure - it is better that "married or elderly people" attend rather than "bachelors and young people, because the former are less excitable". This is also written with ecclesiastical licence.

He sins even - albeit venially - who looks without lust (if he can!) at the "dishonest parts" of animals or watches them mating. "Petting animals is more or less sinful, depending on the intention with which it is done and the danger of pollution it entails". Moral theology examines the problem of "sexual parts rubbing against the animal and rubbing"; but it does not stop there, and also analyses cases such as the "introduction into the vagina of a hen's beak", or that of the woman "who puts saliva or bread in the vagina to move the dog to lick her private parts", or who masturbates the animal "in order to introduce the erect member into her vagina".

The case of a hen's beak inserted into a human vagina referred to in Catholic moral theology is not even mentioned by Dr. Kinsey, who records the most varied of erotic contacts: from

from being sniffed by a dog or licked by a cat to full coitus, as well as sexual acts (usually by men) with dreads, sheep, donkeys, ducks, chickens and geese, even in slaughterhouses. In any case, Kinsey writes of "extremely religious people" who "obtained full satisfaction of their instincts by means animals, since they were convinced that heterosexual intercourse was morally unacceptable" (!)^[277].

2. IS MORAL THEOLOGY EVOLVING?

Of course, we have long since heard the same reply: since then, the Church's thinking has become much more liberal and tolerant. Many of the things that were defended some years ago (some years ago!) and are still defended by conservatives have been superseded and even denounced by moralists; in other words, there has been a remarkable change ("also in this"), there are new perspectives, progress, more dynamism, evolutionary thinking, and so on. But be that as it may, there remains the devastating doctrine imparted for nineteen centuries - and nineteen centuries outweigh the last nineteen years!

And furthermore, is moral theology really changing, or are we simply dealing with a few shamelessly innovative semantic twists coupled with traditional spinelessness? Of course, today, when chastity matters so little (although some young black girls still pay with their lives for the "affront" of premarital defilement, virginity insurance policies still exist in the land of the Pope, and in Werl - a pilgrimage site in West Germany - 4.30 marks are charged for a medallion sewn into petticoats to protect against defilement), theologians are trying their best to give themselves a new lease of life.

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