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TWO IN ONE FLESH

Part Two

THE MYSTERY OF SEX AND MARRIAGE

IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

TWO IN ONE FLESH

Part One An Introduction to Sex and Marriage.

Part Two The Mystery of Sex and Marriage in Catholic
Theology.

Part Three The Practice of Sex and Marriage.

Adam and Eve, from the Adoration of the Lamb.

By Jan Van Eyck

(altar piece in Ghent Cathedral)

TWO IN ONE FLESH—2

THE MYSTERY OF SEX AND MARRIAGE

IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

by the
Rev. E. C. MESSENGER, Ph.D. (Louvain)

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INTRODUCTION

This book, which has as its subject the Catholic Theology of Sex and Marriage, is the second part of a trilogy. The first part has been published under the title *An Introduction to Sex and Marriage*, and it had as its object the dissipating of any anti-sex prejudices which might exist, and in particular the idea that the Christian religion is in some way opposed to the proper exercise of the sex function.

In this Second Part, which is to some extent complete in itself, I aim at giving a more profound and detailed account of Catholic teaching on Sex and Marriage, with a special treatment of its sources in Scripture and Tradition. It has been made as comprehensive as circumstances permit. Thus, as an understanding of the Catholic position on Sex and Marriage is impossible unless we fully grasp the Church's teaching on the Creation and Fall of Man, I have first given an exposition of these doctrines.

Chapter One is entitled *The Natural, the Preternatural and the Supernatural in Man*, and explains the meaning of these terms, and their application to the original creation of man by God. The second and third chapters discuss in detail the method of propagation of the human race intended for the State of Innocence, and the question of virginity in that State. Chapter Four discusses briefly *Other Features of the State of Innocence*. Chapter Five discusses, also briefly, the *Golden Age in human traditions*. Chapter Six proceeds to discuss the *Sin of Adam and Eve*, in the light of the *Book of Genesis*, with special reference to the suggestion that this was somehow connected with the sexual act. Chapter Seven studies the *Effects of the First Sin upon Adam and Eve and their Descendants* again with special reference to sex. Chapter Eight formulates the *Doctrine of Original Sin*. Chapter Nine passes on to study in detail one of the effects of Original Sin, and describes in detail *Sexual Aberrations in the Ancient World*. Chapter Ten discusses the problem of the *Variations in Moral Ideas presented by these aberrations*. Chapter Eleven then discusses the *Old Testament Regulations on Sex*, with special reference to the ritual impurity which is there attached, even to legitimate sex activity. Having thus dealt with the question of sex in the Old Testament, we ought to pass on at once to a consideration of sex in the New Testament. But I have thought it advisable to insert here a series of chapters dealing with the application of sex to matters connected with the Theology of the Incarnation. Thus,

Chapter Twelve briefly studies the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady from this point of view. Chapter Thirteen gives a detailed discussion of the Virginal Conception of Our Lord by Our Lady, with special reference to what I call, for want of a better term, "the embryonic Christ in Mary's womb." Chapter Fourteen deals with the Virgin Birth of Our Lord, and Chapter Fifteen with the Perpetual Virginity of Our Lady. Chapter Sixteen deals briefly with the Moral Corruption of the Pagan World in New Testament times. After these introductory chapters. Chapter Seventeen discusses the Teaching of Our Lord on Sex, Marriage and Virginity, as recorded in the Gospels, with special reference to the indissolubility of marriage, the sinful character of sexual thoughts, and the true nature of religious virginity. Chapter Eighteen passes on to the Doctrine of the Apostles on Sex and Marriage. Chapter Nineteen begins the examination of the data of Catholic Tradition, with Sex on the Greek Fathers. Chapter Twenty passes on to Sex in the Latin Fathers and Theologians. Chapter Twenty-One begins an outline of the Developed Theology of Sex, with a study of Marriage as a Sacrament. This is followed in Chapter Twenty-Two by the Ends of Marriage and of the Sex Act. Chapter Twenty-Three discusses some Applications of the Principles laid down, and Chapter Twenty-Four is devoted to the very important subject of the Place of Pleasure and Passion in the Sex Act. Leaving aside the study of the Religious Aspect of the Sex Act, and the subject of Birth Control, etc., for treatment in the Third and final portion of this work, the next chapter, Twenty-Five, gives a careful and lengthy analysis of the Sense of Shame, and suggest a somewhat new explanation. Chapter Twenty-Six similarly discusses the subject of Modesty, Clothes and Nudity. To make our treatment of the subject quite complete, the final chapter, Twenty-Seven, deals with the question of the existence of sex in the risen life of man, in the angels, and in God. A first Appendix is devoted to the difficult question of the relation between Contemplation and Sexual Activity, in the mind of St. Thomas Aquinas, and a second Appendix enumerates the principal points in St. Thomas's teaching referred to in this work.

A third Appendix outlines a new interpretation of the Fall narrative in Genesis Hi, set forth by Canon Coppens, of Louvain, and also a new pronouncement by the Holy See on the historical character of Genesis i-xi.

In the course of this Second Part of my work, I have called attention to some very interesting and significant ideas which have been set forward from time to time by the Fathers and theologians of the Church, and I have here and there suggested developments and applications of these, by way of hypotheses. But I wish to make it

clear once for all that I put these forward only as matter for discussion, and I wish to submit in advance everything that I write or suggest to Holy Mother Church for her considered judgment. Theology makes progress by the development of old ideas, and the formulation of new ones. But ultimately it is for the Magisterium of the Church to judge whether these developments or suggestions are compatible with the Faith once delivered to the Saints, and it is my one and only desire to accept and teach what the Church in fact teaches and approves, and to reject what she condemns.

“For this shall man leave father and mother,
and shall cleave to his wife, and the two
shall come to be one flesh. The mystery
here is great—I mean in reference to Christ
and to the Church.”—Ephesians v. 30-32.
(Westminster Version).

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CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURAL, PRETERNATURAL, AND SUPERNATURAL IN MAN

It is hoped that, as a result of the reading of Part One, the prejudice against sex will to some extent have been dissipated, and that the consideration of the scientific and philosophical aspects of the subject will have provided a sufficient preparation for a study of the theological position in this Second Part of our work. Here we shall examine more closely the teaching of the Church on sex, with special reference to the Fall of Man and its repercussions on the matter, and this will enable us to consider those passages of the Old Testament which at first sight seem to regard sex as unclean. For it is in the light of the results of the Fall that these passages can best be understood.

A consideration of the Fall of Man, however, presupposes a careful examination of the state of man before the Fall, and this requires a reconsideration of some aspects of the narrative of the Creation, as given in the first chapters of Genesis. In particular, we must explain what theologians mean and imply by the state of "original justice" or "integrity" possessed at first by unfallen man. After this, we can consider in turn the Fall itself, in its nature and consequences, and the significance of the ritual impurity associated with the sex act in some Old Testament books.

Then we shall pass on to a study of the bearing of sex upon the Incarnation. This will prepare the way for a study of the teaching of the New Testament on sex, marriage and virginity, and this in turn will, be followed by an examination of some developments of these doctrines found in the Fathers. Then we shall deal with the sacramental character of marriage, and the question of its various ends, with special reference to modern discussions on this subject and their repercussions in theology. To complete the subject, we shall discuss the question of sex in human life after the resurrection, sex in the angels, and the question of sex in the Deity.

Throughout we shall take as our guide the doctrines and principles of St. Thomas Aquinas, and we shall emphasise some points in his treatment which have been somewhat neglected.

We begin, then, with a brief statement of the theology of human

nature, as an introduction to our reconsideration of man as he was created by God in the beginning.

Theologians distinguish six theoretical human states, as follows:

First, there is the “state of pure nature”, in which man would exist, if he had not been raised to the supernatural state, and had not been endowed with any “preternatural gifts”. He would have had all the powers and gifts due to his nature as such, but nothing more.

Secondly, we can conceive a “state of integral nature”, in which the natural endowments of man would be supplemented by certain “preternatural gifts”, but in which he would still be without the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace.

Thirdly, there might be a “merely supernatural state”, in which man’s nature would be supplemented by the gift of grace, but not by the preternatural gifts already mentioned.

Fourthly, we have the “state of innocence” or of “original justice”, which was the actual state of our first parents before the Fall. In this state, their nature was endowed both with preternatural gifts and with supernatural grace.

Fifthly, we might have the “state of fallen but unredeemed nature”, which would have been the state of man after the Fall had God not decreed the Redemption.

Sixthly, we have the “state of fallen and redeemed nature”, which is precisely the state of man at the present time.

This meticulous analysis may seem to be rather unnecessary, but in point of fact it is of the greatest use in clarifying our ideas. But we must bear in mind from the first that, historically, there have been only two states of mankind, namely, that of man as he existed before the Fall, and that of man as he has existed since. Even so, it is by a careful analysis of these two historic states that theologians have arrived at a distinction between certain characteristics found in one or other state, and this has led to the theoretical distinction between the states which historically existed, and others which were conceivable though in fact they never existed.

The Church, then, has reflected upon the implications of the account of the creation of man as found in Genesis, and has studied this particularly in the light of subsequent revelations found in Scripture and Tradition. These may be summed up by saying that, in the words of St. Peter, man was made “partaker of the divine nature”, by the gift of grace. The purpose of this gift of grace is to enable us to see God as He is, in Himself, and not merely as revealed in creatures. Reflecting upon this destiny, the Church has asserted that it is altogether “supernatural” in character; that is, that it is not one which man could claim as a right, and not one to which he could attain by his own unaided powers.

This is, indeed, clear from a study of our natural gifts. By nature we are endowed with intellect and will. The proper and connatural object of our knowledge is ourselves and the external world, and through these we are able to rise to a knowledge of the existence of God as Creator, and obtain some knowledge of His nature and attributes as manifested in the world He has made, and particularly, of his supreme Truth and Goodness. Thus, our ultimate aim from the natural standpoint, is to know God the Creator through his creatures. Correspondingly, the ultimate object of our wills is to love God as thus known.

The “natural” end of man is thus to know and love God as Creator through his creatures, by the exercise of his natural faculties. But all this is far from making us “partakers of the Divine nature”, or fitting us for the Vision of God as He is in himself. That is a “supernatural” destiny, and it is precisely the destiny allotted to man from the beginning. To prepare for this destiny, in which we share divine characteristics—for, as only the Infinite Being can truly know Himself as He is in Himself, we must, so to speak, be “divinised” or raised above our merely human and created dignity, and this is precisely the effect of the gift of sanctifying grace, which confers upon us a Divine “sonship”.

The existence of this Divine “sonship” is plainly taught in Holy Scripture, and the Church’s Fathers and theologians have seen an intimation of it in the statement in Genesis that man was made in God’s “image and likeness”.

There is a further point. Even a casual reading of the account of man as he existed before the Fall makes it evident that, besides possessing the gift of sanctifying grace, man then enjoyed many other gifts and privileges which he does not possess now. And in particular, the narrative implies that he possessed four particular “preternatural” gifts. These call for a brief explanation. We can usefully consider them in the following order: first, those gifts which concern mainly the physical organism; next the gift which affects the intellect, and finally the one which affects the emotional and volitional life.

First, then, we have two gifts which are connected with the physical organism, namely, “immunity from pain and suffering”, and “immunity from death”. By the first of these, theologians say, man was preserved, by a special Divine providence, from those ills to which human flesh is normally liable. An indication of this is seen in the description of the general state of felicity enjoyed by man in the Garden of Eden, and in the fact that pain and disease are not mentioned in Genesis until after the Fall. Even so, as one modern theologian has remarked:

“In this matter, all exaggeration must be avoided. It is not necessary to suppose that Adam was wholly incapable of feeling pain: the possession of impassibility simply means that he was secured against all the pains and evils which are, directly and indirectly, the consequence of sin, ignorance and folly.”¹

Certainly, pain itself fulfils a most useful biological function, revealing as it does the presence of some element of disorder in the physical organism, or some danger to its well-being. Hence the power to feel such pain certainly belongs to human nature as such and is beneficial rather than otherwise. If Adam was preserved from physical disorders, or dangers to his physical well-being, there would automatically be no need to feel such pain. But it would require a special Providence to shield him from all such disorders and dangers. Disease, however, is on a rather different footing. A perfect physical organism, while not exactly immune from disease, would presumably be perfectly able to resist it. Doubtless Divine Providence, by endowing Adam’s organism with a high degree of perfection, and an equally high degree of resistance, rendered it almost if not entirely immune from disease, and this immunity may well have become absolute by a special Providence preserving his frame from attack by ordinary diseases. But here again we must be careful, as Dr. Miller says, to avoid all unnecessary exaggerations. Adam, in any case, remained naturally liable to pain and suffering.

The next gift we will consider is that of “immunity from death”.

That our first parents were to be immune from physical death is plainly taught in the narrative in Genesis. Yet it is equally clear that, from the natural point of view, the physical organism of the human body could not be expected to continue to live for ever. Like all other organisms, it is naturally subject to decline, decay and ultimately to physical death. Hence the death of the body is natural to man, as it is to other animals, and any physical immortality could only be a “preternatural gift”, not due to human nature as such. It might, of course, be urged that, as the human soul is essentially destined to be the “form” of a human body, and moreover is itself immortal, man would be sadly incomplete if after death the soul were for ever deprived of its body. We can answer this by conjecturing, with the late Father Rickaby,² that either Adam’s body would have been “raised again to life, or that at least he would have received from the hand of his beneficent Creator some new body, by means of which his lower or sensitive faculties might be allowed their legitimate action, and might conjointly with the will and intellect, have

¹ Dr. Miller, *Tall of Man*, p. 8.

* Immaculate Conception, p. 7.

participated in an immortal happiness". Even so, this would not have prevented the advent of death and the temporary separation of soul and body. But precisely this freedom from death was attributed to our first parents before the Fall, and that is rightly called a "preternatural gift".

We pass on now to a gift affecting Adam's intellectual endowments, i.e., his "immunity from ignorance". This consisted of the direct infusion into Adam's mind of knowledge which he would normally only have been able to acquire, if at all, by long experience and reflection. Adam was given all the knowledge required in view of his position as head of the human race, and as the first human being. In addition, he must also have been given some knowledge of his supernatural state and destiny, and the way in which he was to attain to this. There is, however, no need to suppose that he was given an advanced theological knowledge of the supernatural. And equally, while he was doubtless given such knowledge as was necessary for him to live in the world as Nature's Lord and Master, it is not necessary to suppose that he knew all the secrets of the Universe, much less that he was acquainted with all the data of the arts and sciences.¹ The main point is that the narrative in Genesis indicates that Adam did in fact possess some knowledge of God, himself, and the world around him, which he could not have acquired merely by the exercise of his own unaided powers. The narrative implies that he knew himself, and God, and moreover, that he was able to name all the animals he saw, giving them names corresponding to their nature and characteristics. We have seen that this part of the narrative is interpreted by some Fathers and theologians as implying also that Adam knew the process of generation, and was also in possession of the moral laws governing these and cognate matters.² It certainly seems reasonable to hold that these fundamental matters were "revealed" to him, and that he was not left to puzzle these things out for himself. It was otherwise, of course, with merely natural knowledge. There is no reason to suppose that he possessed such knowledge in a degree required in fact only in a more advanced stage of civilisation. Adam was doubtless able to pass on to his descendants such knowledge as he himself possessed, and in this connection it is interesting to note that the Book of Genesis testifies to a certain development in the life of husbandry and the

¹ There has been some exaggeration on this matter, even by St. Augustine (*Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*, v. 1). This subject is discussed in the *Clergy Review* for Oct., 1943 (pp. 475-476) and Dec., 1943 (pp. 574-576). In the latter place, Canon Smith remarks that "the majority of theologians would concede that the extent of Adam's knowledge must not be exaggerated", and he adds that "the subject is fully and carefully treated by L. Janssens, O.S.B., in his *Summa Theologica*, Vol. VHI, pp. 48-73."

² See Part One, p. 25.

hunt in early man, together with a parallel development of the musical arts and the use of metals.¹ This later progress in the arts and crafts obviously implies definite limitations in the knowledge of such things possessed by our first parents.

There would be an additional reason for limiting Adam's knowledge if we were to accept an interesting idea put forward by some early Fathers, and in particular by St. Theophilus of Antioch,² St. Irenaeus,³ and St. Methodius of Olympus,⁴ to the effect that Adam was a child ('neepios'), and therefore had a comparatively undeveloped mind. But this term may be no more than a rhetorical allusion to "the childhood of the race". On the other hand, it may have some basis in reality, and Adam and Eve may at first have been comparatively childlike creatures. The precise origin of this idea is unknown. So far as I am aware, there is no trace of it in earlier Jewish tradition. It is of interest to note that St. Augustine, while not favouring it, does not altogether reject the possibility that Adam began existence as a child. He merely says that it is "more credible" (credibilius) that Adam was formed as an adult.⁵ This somewhat neglected aspect of early Christian Tradition is obviously capable of interesting developments.⁶ In any case, as I have said, while there is good reason to hold that Adam did in fact possess infused knowledge, there is no need to exaggerate either its extent or its depth. We shall return to this matter later, when we consider Adam's moral endowments, and the Fall.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the special gift of infused knowledge was peculiar to our first parents, and their children would have been born without such knowledge. But while Adam's children could not have possessed infused knowledge, it is difficult to see why Adam himself could not have passed on to them the knowledge which he himself possessed.

We come now to the last "preternatural gift", that of "immunity from concupiscence". This means that the sensitive desires of our first parents were "preternaturally" limited and confined within the bounds of those things which were really in harmony with human nature as a whole. The sense, faculties of man naturally desire whatever corresponds to them, irrespective of any question

1 See Genesis iv, and v. 20-22. The individuals mentioned in connection with these developments may stand for groups of men following particular occupations. Cf. Humphrey Johnson, *Bible and Early History of Mankind*, pp. 56-58.

2 *Apologia ad Autol.*, ii, 24-25.

3 *Adv. haer.*, IV, lxii; lxiii, 1; *Demonstration*, 12.

4 *Symposium*, iii. 5. On this subject see N. P. Williams, *Fall and Original Sin*, pp. 176. i93» 25q

5 *De Genesi ad litteram*. Lib. VI, 13-18. Cf. my *Evolution and Theology*, pp. 170-171.

6 St. Thomas does not seem to deal with this matter, though he must have been acquainted with St. Augustine's discussion of it.

as to whether or in what degree such things are good for man as a whole. We are endowed, indeed, with intellect and will, and by means of these higher faculties, we are able both to know what is in fact good for us, and by our wills to keep our desires within due bounds. In other words, we are able, by the exercise of our higher faculties, to control our lower appetites. The control is, of course, difficult and unstable at times, but it is nevertheless not impossible. Hence, we could not say that our natures called for a limitation and binding of the sense appetites to things that are in fact good for us. In our first parents, this control and limitation was secured precisely by this “preternatural gift”, through a special Divine Providence, and this gift, supplementing our normal human nature, secured at once from the beginning, and infallibly, that subjection of our appetites to right reason which is secured in other animals through the play of instincts, and in ordinary human beings results from a prolonged and difficult exercise of intellect and will. Theologians find an indication of the presence of this gift in our first parents in the fact that, in the narrative in Genesis, Adam and Eve are described as being “naked, but unashamed”.

It must be carefully noted that this preternatural gift of “immunity from concupiscence” does not mean the entire absence of sense desires, much less the absence of human passions. For once more, the preternatural gifts were something added to nature, and not something which took the place of anything belonging to our nature. Human nature was whole and entire in Adam, as in ourselves. Now, an integral part of human nature is the existence of certain sense “passions”, which are connected with the desire or possession of the good. Examples are the passions of love, joy, desire and hope. St. Thomas Aquinas says expressly that Adam possessed all these passions, but adds that, because of the preternatural gifts, they were entirely under the control of his reason, and not apt to interfere with its exercise, as happens in our own case. Adam even possessed the passion of hatred according to St. Thomas, but the object of this was only the Devil and his works (*Summa Theologica*, I, q. 95, art. 3, ad. 2).

St. Thomas excludes from Adam the passion of fear, and this for the reason that its exercise was in his case unnecessary, inasmuch as he was preserved from those evils which normally give rise to fear, by a special Divine providence.¹ Some other normal passions are also excluded from Adam by St. Thomas, for a similar reason. But in any case it would seem that what St. Thomas here has in mind is the exercise of such passions rather than their actual existence. Probably these passions were present radically.

¹ *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 95, art. 2.

Similarly, Adam, possessing a true and complete human nature, possessed all normal virtues, though not all in the same way that we ourselves possess them. Some virtues, St. Thomas remarks, do not imply the presence of any imperfection, examples being justice and charity. These virtues were of course possessed by Adam, as by ourselves. There are other human virtues which do in fact imply the existence of certain imperfections. If the particular imperfections implied were not such as were excluded by the perfection of man's original state, then these virtues were in fact possessed by Adam. Examples of such virtues would be faith and hope. But if the imperfection implied in a virtue was inconsistent with Adam's original state, then, though he might have possessed this virtue as a habit or power, he could not have exercised it. Thus, St. Thomas says that Adam before the Fall did not possess the virtue of penance or sorrow for sin, so far as the act of the virtue is concerned, for he was at that time free from sin. Nevertheless Adam possessed the virtue "in habit", for he was so constituted that, if he had sinned, he would have been sorry for his sin.¹

In particular, St. Thomas says that Adam in the state of innocence possessed the virtue of temperance. To the objection that temperance is concerned with the moderation of unbridled desire, which did not exist in Adam but was excluded by the preternatural gift of immunity from concupiscence, St. Thomas replies that temperance as such can exist and function by keeping all passions, etc., within due bounds from the first.²

We must now point out that the virtue of temperance excludes two opposite vices, those of intemperance and insensibility. Intemperance consists in excess in natural pleasures, while insensibility is defined as contempt or rejection of natural pleasures as though these were evil. There is a tendency among authors to expatiate at great length on the evils of intemperance, but there is seldom any mention of even the possibility of the existence of the vice of insensibility.³ Yet St. Thomas definitely regards it as one. His treatment of it is worthy of notice. In the *Summa Theologica*, *Ha Ilae*, q. 142, art. 1, he writes:

"Everything which is contrary to the natural order is vicious.

¹ *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 95, art. 3.

² *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 95, art. 3, ad. 1. In this way, the virtue of temperance was doubtless intimately connected with Adam's gift of "immunity from concupiscence".

³ It is, however, mentioned in Wenham's *Instructions in Christian Doctrine*, 1909, p. 388 (seven lines). It is not mentioned in Hart's *Student's Catholic Doctrine*. Neither is it mentioned in the *English Catechism of Christian Doctrine*. As to the theologians, it finds no place in Tanquemy or Ptummer, Vermeersch dismisses it in one line (*Theologia Morales*, -Vol. II, p. 611); Lehmkuhl gives it four (*Theologia Morales*, Vol. I, p. 483); Fr. Davis gives it a paragraph (*Moral and Pastoral Theology*, Vol. I, p. 271).

But Nature has attached pleasure to operations which are necessary for human life. Hence, the natural order requires that a man shall use these pleasures, in so far as it is necessary to do so either for health, or for the conservation of the individual or that of the species. If, therefore, anyone should so avoid such pleasures as to forego those things which are necessary for the conservation of Nature, he would commit a sin.”¹

St. Thomas adds that it is sometimes praiseworthy to abstain from such pleasures for a particular end. Thus, some abstain from pleasures, of food, drink or sex, for the sake of their bodily health. Abstention is also legitimate if required for the carrying out of some office or function.²

In his answer to the second difficulty, St. Thomas remarks that those who give themselves up to the contemplative life, and transmit spiritual good to others through a kind of spiritual propagation, laudably abstain from many pleasures, from which those whose duty it is to occupy themselves with corporal works and bodily generation do not laudably abstain.³

In the same part of the *Summa Theologica*, q. 153, art. 3, ad. 3. St. Thomas mentions as an example of insensibility that of a man who so detests the natural use of woman that he even refuses to fulfil his debt to his wife in this regard.⁴

It would thus be certainly sinful, according to St. Thomas, to reject the pleasure of sex as something intrinsically evil. St. Thomas was no puritan in these matters. This particular vice of insensibility was absent from Adam and Eve in the state of innocence, as we shall see, and St. Thomas makes a very significant and interesting remark in this connection, which we discuss in a later chapter.^{5 6}

¹ “Omne illud quod contrariatur ordini naturali est vitiosum-. Natura autem delectationem apposuit operationibus necessariis ad vitam hominis. Et ideo naturalis ordo requirit ut homo intantum hujusmodi delectationibus utatur, quantum necessarium est salutis humane, vel quantum ad conservationem individui, vel quantum ad conservationem speciei. Si quis ergo intantum delectationem refugeret quod praetermitteret ea quae sunt necessaria ad conservationem naturae, peccaret, quasi ordini naturali repugnans.”—loc. cit. Cf. *ibid.*, ad. 2.

² “Ab hujusmodi delectationibus consequentibus hujusmodi operationes quandoque laudabile vel etiam necessarium est abstinere propter aliquem finem; sicut propter sanitatem corporalem aliqui abstinere a quibusdam delectationibus ciborum, potuum et venereorum; et etiam propter alicujus officii executionem, sicut athletae, et milites . . . et similiter poenitentes . . . et homines volentes contemplationi et rebus divinis vacare.”

³ “Homines qui hoc officium assumpserunt ut contemplationi vacent, et bonum spirituale quasi quadam spirituali propagatione in alios transmittant, a multis delectabilibus laudabiliter abstinere, a quibus illi quibus ex officio competit operibus corporalibus et generationi carnali vacare, laudabiliter non abstinere.”

⁴ “Accidit hoc vitium in eo qui intantum detestatur mulierum usum quod etiam uxori debitum non reddit.”

⁶ See p. 18.

Theologians are accustomed to link up the virtue of temperance with various subsidiary qualities. Two of these, called in Latin *verecundia* and *honestas*, are called “integral parts” of temperance; four others, namely abstinence, sobriety, chastity and *pudicitia*, are known as “subjective parts”; while continence, humility, mildness (or “clemency”) and *modestas*, are regarded as “potential parts”. The classification and definition of these various qualities are not always very clear, and seem to differ in different authors.¹ It is not necessary for our purpose to discuss if, and in what measure, they were all found in Adam in the state of innocence. But it will be useful to discuss the existence in that state of the virtues of chastity and continence, and also the related qualities of *pudicitia*, *verecundia*, and modesty.

Chastity, as we have seen, is the virtue which prescribes due moderation in the exercise of the sex appetite, confining it within the bounds of right reason. We have already pointed out that it does not completely exclude the exercise of sex. Chastity is quite compatible with the use of sex within the married state. But chastity obviously excludes the exercise of sex outside that state. Abstinence from the use of sex is called “continence”. It is, in turn, closely related with “virginity”. Physical virginity has already been explained, and needs no further discussion. Viewed from the psychological standpoint, virginity is defined as a firm purpose to abstain from all sex pleasures.

Considering these matters in turn, we must obviously attribute

¹ St. Thomas’s terminology deserves a special explanatory note. He explains in *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 143, art. 1, that “integral parts” of a virtue are the “necessary conditions which accompany that virtue”. Thus, the virtue of temperance has two such “integral parts”, *verecundia* and *honestas*. The “subjective parts” of a virtue are the species or kinds of it. Thus temperance is concerned with pleasures of touch, which are of two kinds. Some such pleasures are concerned with nutrition, and these require the virtues of “abstinence” and “sobriety”, cultivating moderation in eating and drinking. Other such pleasures are connected with the generative function, and this gives us the virtues of “chastity” and “*pudicitia*”. Thirdly, the “potential parts” of a virtue are subsidiary virtues which are concerned with certain subsidiary matters. Thus, temperance has the following “potential parts” or subsidiary virtues: “*continentia*”, “*humilitas*”, “*mansuetudo*” or “*dementia*”, “*modestia*”. “*Continentia*” is in this article explained as that virtue which controls the motion of the will which tends to result from the impetus of passion. But in IIa IIae, q. 155, art. 1, St. Thomas says that according to some, basing themselves upon St. Paul, continence is the virtue which leads one to abstain from all venereal pleasure. Such “perfect continence” is of two kinds; the principal kind is “virginity”, and the secondary kind is “widowhood”. Note that, in any case, according to St. Thomas, continence is a “potential part”, not of chastity, but of temperance. Later on in the *Summa*, St. Thomas deals with the evangelical counsels (IIa IIae, q. 186), and here he speaks, not of chastity, but of “perpetual continence” (art. 4). When he deals with “virginity” (IIa IIae, q. 152), St. Thomas says that, as a virtue, this is “the formal and full will to abstain perpetually from all venereal pleasure”, and says that this virtue is related to chastity “as magnificence is related to liberality”. Obviously virginity, as thus defined, is very similar, if not identical, to one of the senses of “continence”, as set forth above. Modesty is dealt with later.

to Adam and Eve in the state of innocence the virtue of chastity, and in any case this was linked up with their possession of the preternatural gift of immunity from concupiscence. Their chastity, however, would not exclude the right use of marriage, or due pleasure in that use, as we shall explain later.

The virtue of continence, however, is definitely excluded by St. Thomas from our first parents. But a discussion of this subject is best postponed till we deal with the use of marriage in the state of innocence. That will also be the place to discuss the question of virginity in that state.

This leaves us with pudicitia, verecundia, and modesty. Pudicitia, as St. Thomas remarks,¹ comes from the word pudor, signifying verecundia. Pudicitia is concerned specially with subsidiary sex matters, such as looks, kisses, touches. It is not a virtue separate from that of chastity itself, but rather an application of the virtue of chastity to these subsidiary things, and, like that virtue, it inculcates due moderation in these matters in accordance with right reason, but does not exclude them altogether.² Hence, there is no reason why, in this sense, pudicitia should not be attributed to our first parents in the state of innocence.

Next, we come to verecundia, which seems to be identical with what is usually known as the "sense of shame". It is of the utmost importance to note that St. Thomas expressly denies that verecundia is a virtue, in the strict sense of the word. For, he argues, all virtues are connected in some way with perfection, while verecundia is associated with imperfection. It is, in fact, connected with the passion of fear, and consists precisely in the fear of disgrace which would result from some evil, and particularly from some immodest act. St. Thomas goes on to remark that one who is perfect in virtue does not contemplate the possibility of committing such an act, and hence a perfect person would not possess this characteristic, improperly called a virtue.³

¹Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 151, art. 4.

² Thus, St. Thomas's treatment is quite free from the confusion we find, e.g., in the treatment of actus impudicitiae in Genicot-Salsmans (cf. Part One, p. 4). Just as the virtue of chastity does not exclude the exercise of the sex act, but only its wrongful exercise, so also the attached virtue of pudicitia, according to St. Thomas, excludes, not all sexual looks, kisses, touches, etc., but only those which are not in accordance with right reason, or the moderation which temperance (and therefore chastity) requires. St. Thomas would be quite incapable of saying, as Genicot does, that actus impudicitiae are on the one hand unlawful and wrong, and on the other hand are lawful for married persons, as Genicot seems to do.

³ Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 144, art. 1: "Proprie virtus perfectio quaedam est—Et ideo omne illud quod repugnat perfectioni, etiamsi sit bonum, deficit a ratione virtutis. Verecundia autem repugnat perfectioni: est enim timor alicujus turpis, quod scilicet est exprobrabile. Unde Damascenus dicit quod 'verecundia est timor de turpi actu.' . . . Ille autem qui est perfectus secundum habitum virtutis, non apprehendit aliquid exprobrabile et turpe ad faciendum, ut possibile et arduum, id est, difficile ad

In view of this, it is surely unfortunate that the “sense of shame” should be called a “virtue”, without any qualification, in an otherwise excellent textbook on the Supernatural Virtues.¹ *Verecundia* or the “sense of shame” is doubtless admirable in its place, and has its uses. But it is not a virtue, at least in the strict sense. This whole subject will be considered in the final chapter of this work. But it will be useful here to give a quotation from a book already mentioned, *Education de la Chastete*, by Canon Knoch of Liege. On p. 63 the writer remarks that “pudor and pudicitia are in no way synonyms,” and points out further that “the sense of shame (pudor) is not chastity: according to St. Thomas it is not even a virtue”.² He then continues as follows: “Pudor is the natural, instinctive fear of that which is contrary to chastity, and specially contrary to pudicitia.” He adds that “this fear exists in fallen man . . . but mankind in the state of innocence had not this fear, and hence he did not know shame.” Finally, the Canon makes this significant remark: “In the same way, in the present state of things, a mature man, in the peaceful possession of proved virtue, is relatively free from the troubles of pudor.” These wise words are to be commended to all who mistakenly think that the sense of shame is a virtue, or that it is a quality that should be present in all people, at all times.

One thing at least is clear, from the text of Holy Scripture this “sense of shame” was completely absent from our first parents, as God made them. For we read in the Book of Genesis (ii, 25) that Adam and Eve were “both naked, but unashamed”.

The subject of nakedness and the presence or absence of shame leads us naturally to the consideration of the virtue of modesty, which, according to St. Thomas, moderates amongst other things, external movements and regulates the matter of clothing. As a branch of the general virtue of temperance, it moderates such matters in accordance with the prescriptions of reason. St. Thomas explains that we can be immoderate in this matter, or in other words “immodest”, either in respect to the customs of those amongst whom we live, or in respect to the extent to which such things occupy our minds. (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 169, art. 1).

vitandum, neque etiam actu facit aliquid turpe unde opprobrium timeat. Unde verecundia, proprie loquendo, non est virtus; deficit enim a perfectione virtutis. . . . Verecundia (est) quaedam laudabilis passio.” Similarly Prummer says that “verecundia non est virtus proprie dicta, sed passio laudabilis, quae facit hominem erubescere quando aliquid probrosi ilium tangit” (*Vademecum Theol. Mor.*, p. 278). Again, Serullanges writes: “Cette sorte de crainte n’est pas proprement une vertu: car premierement c’est un mouvement passionnel, non une disposition volontaire” (*Morale de Saint Thomas d’Aquin*, p. 451).

¹ *Supernatural Virtues*, by Rev. Dr. Flynn (now Bishop of Lancaster), p. 75.

² Canon Knoch here gives the reference: II-II, q. 141. This should be I-II, q. 144, art. 1.

Leaving a general discussion of the virtue of modesty to a later chapter, and confining ourselves here to its relation to the state of innocence, we think that, according to St. Thomas, the virtue was fundamentally present in that state, but that its application was, so to speak, modified to some extent, inasmuch as, owing to the presence of the preternatural gifts, no clothes were worn at all. Adam and Eve were naked, and unashamed. And obviously, as modesty required adherence to the standard then existing (in virtue of the principle which St. Thomas has laid down), this absence of clothing would have continued to have characterised individual human beings had the state of innocence continued.

We may reasonably pause here, and consider some aspects of the picture of our first parents in the state of innocence, as thus developed by Catholic Theology. It may be admitted at once that this meticulous catalogue of Adam's virtues may seem rather artificial, and to some extent unreal, for its effect is to represent Adam as merely a conglomeration of gifts and virtues, theological and moral. But in reality, the aim of theologians in this dissection of Adam's moral equipment is merely to emphasise his truly human constitution. It must be emphasised that virtues as such are not directly present to human consciousness: it is only by reflection upon our acts that we realise that we have the power so to act, and the facility to act which comes from the possession of a particular virtue. Hence, the ascription of all these virtues to Adam is intended merely to emphasise that Adam acted in these precise ways, and had the facility so to act which is the effect of these virtues. The same applies in a sense to the attribution to Adam of various passions. But passions are more directly present to consciousness, for they are precisely emotions and feelings, accompanied by certain bodily modifications. In any case, far from making Adam less human, the virtues and passions we have attributed to him make him eminently a human being in the truest sense of the word.

A difficulty doubtless arises from the attribution to Adam of the preternatural gifts. But a careful study of these has shown that these are neither strictly "supernatural", nor, a fortiori, "unnatural", but are rather certain supplementary endowments, added to human nature and perfecting it, not destroying it. While theologians envisage the theoretical possibility of a state of human nature which would have these supplementary gifts without the supreme gift of sanctifying grace, it seems preferable to hold, with St. Thomas, that these gifts find their ultimate explanation precisely in the elevation of man to the supernatural order. The gift of grace had the special effect of subjecting man's mind to God, and these preternatural gifts in turn subjected man's lower nature to the control of his reason and

will. Hence, the rebellion of man's mind against God, involving the loss of the supernatural gift of grace, naturally involved also, as a punishment, the loss of these preternatural gifts.¹

The gift of grace has been restored to us through Christ our Lord. The preternatural gifts, indeed, have not been restored to us in this life. They will, however, be restored to us equivalently in the next world. And even in this life, our aim should surely be to regain the lost equilibrium in our nature, so far as may be, and thus, so far as may be, to regain the happy state in which man existed in the Garden of Eden.² It is this fact and this ideal that gives such an interest to a study of Adam and Eve in the state of innocence. It is doubtless necessary for us, in our fallen state, to practice some special virtues, such as mortification, penance, etc., which were not necessary in our first parents. But these are precisely means to an end, and the aim of these virtues, peculiar to our present state, is to help us to restore so far as possible the happy condition in which the human race once existed. And in particular, the sense of shame, though of great use in our present state, is largely, though, as we shall see³, not entirely the result of sin, and its cultivation should never lead us to think that in its present form it is something desirable in itself. Rather we ought to desire that we could be like Adam and Eve, naked and unashamed.

On the other hand, we must not go to the other extreme, and make the mistake of supposing that we can restore the condition of man in the state of innocence in its entirety. There must ever remain a difference between a man who has never sinned, and one who has sinned and then repented.

¹ Cf. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 94, art. 4: "Ex ipsa rectitudine primi status apparet . . . quod quamdiu anima maneret Deo subdita, tamdiu in homine inferiora superioribus subderentur, nec superiora per inferiora impedirentur." Also q. 95, art. 1: "'Deus fecit hominem rectum'. Erat haec rectitudo secundum hoc quod ratio subdebatur Deo, rationi vero inferiores vires, et animae corpus. Prima autem subjectio erat causa et secundae et tertiae." . . . Unde Augustinus dicit quod 'postquam praecepti facta transgressio est, confestim gratia deserente divina, de corporum suorum nuditate confusi sunt. Senserunt enim motum inobedientis carnis suae, tanquam reciprocā poenā inobedientiae suae.' "

² Strangely enough, a distinguished theologian, who read this present work in manuscript, quarrelled with this statement, and seemed to scent some queer heresy in it. Yet it would seem to be perfectly orthodox. Dom Anselm Stolz, O.S.B., the learned theologian who held the Chair of Dogmatic Theology at the College of Sant Anselmo in Rome, wrote thus in his *Spiritual Perfection* (translated by the Right Rev. Dr. Williams, Abbot of Belmont, and published by Herder): "Christian asceticism must regard the corporeal life of Adam as its starting point, and, in a certain sense, as its final goal. . . . Decisive for the corporeal life of Adam was the perfect subordination of his body to his soul, and of his sensitive soul to the spirit. . . . Through the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ this unity is to be restored. . . ." (p. 201). He adds, of course, that "the grace of the original state will never be restored completely in this world"! (p. 209).

³ See Chapter Twenty-Five.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROPAGATION OF THE HUMAN RACE IN THE STATE OF INNOCENCE

We now come to the question of the mode of propagation of the human race which God intended for Adam and Eve while in the state of innocence. To some extent, it should be obvious from the first part of this work, that this propagation would have been by the sexual union of Adam and Eve in the normal way. For, as we have shown, they were created by God precisely as male and female, and to them, precisely as male and female, was addressed the precept, "Increase and multiply". Moreover, the narrative in Genesis plainly implies that Adam and Eve were husband and wife.

Nevertheless, there have in fact been some Jewish writers and Christian Fathers who have recoiled from this idea, and have suggested instead that our first parents would have propagated their kind, not by sexual union, but in some mysterious angelic manner. It would seem that this school of thought had its beginning in Alexandria, and that its first Christian advocate was Origen. He suggested that man was originally a spirit, existing in the upper regions of the Universe and not on this earth. Origen did not expressly assert that there would have been no human generation by sexual union while man remained in that state. But this was really implied in his theory, and he certainly emphasised the fact that Adam did not have sexual knowledge of his wife until after the Fall.¹

These ideas influenced a group of Fathers who were more or less disciples of Origen. Thus, St. Gregory of Nyssa favoured Origen's idea of a celestial Garden of Eden above the clouds. On the other hand, he held that man in the state of innocence possessed a body as well as a soul. He held fast to the traditional teaching that, in point of fact, Adam and Eve had no sexual relations before the Fall, and went on to say that, had the Fall not taken place, the human race would, have been propagated in some angelic way.

There is an obvious difficulty against this theory in the fact that Adam and Eve were male and female, with the respective organs of the sexes, before the Fall. St. Gregory of Nyssa offers the explanation

¹ Commentary on Romans, v. 9.

that God endowed them with these sex organs from the beginning, not because He wished or intended man to use them, but because He knew that man would fall, and would then have to propagate his kind in the usual way of animals. Such is the strange theory outlined by St. Gregory of Nyssa in his treatise *On the Making of Man*.¹ We must point out in passing, that St. Gregory does not assert that the sin whereby Adam fell was the sexual act.

St. Augustine of Hippo was at first influenced by the ideas of the Alexandrian School, and hence was inclined for a time to accept the idea that Adam's body before the Fall was a transparent or ethereal one, which would not have been subject to sexual generation. But he abandoned these ideas later, as we see from his *De Genesi ad litteram*. Lib. IX, cap. 3. Here he says definitely that in Paradise there would have been sexual generation, though without lust.² He sets forth his ideas with great clarity in the *De Civitate Dei*, Lib. XIV, cc. xxi-xxiii. Here are some quotations explaining his view:

"God forbid that we should think our first parents would have fulfilled the precept 'Increase and multiply' in the lust that made them later blush and hide their private parts: that lust was not in them until after their sin. . . . But the blessing of marriage for the increase, multiplication and peopling of the earth not only remained in them after their sin, but was given to them before their sin, to show that the procreation of children belongs to the glory of marriage and not to the punishment of sin. . . .

"We doubt not at all that this increase, multiplication and peopling of the earth was, by God's goodness, bestowed upon marriage as He ordained it in the beginning, before man sinned, and indeed when He made them male and female, for the two sexes were manifest in their flesh. . . .

"He who says that there would have been neither copulation nor propagation but for sin simply makes sin the origin of the holy number of saints. For if . . . sin was their only means of generation, then truly sin was necessary in order to make the number of saints more than two. But if it is absurd to say this—and it is—we must hold that the number of God's citizens would have been as great, if man had not sinned, as shall now be gathered, by God's grace, out of the multitude of sinners.... And therefore we must hold that marriage, as it would fittingly have existed in

¹ See *Evolution and Theology*, by the present writer, pp. 138-140, and also an article in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* for July 1931.

² "Non video quod prohibere potuerit ut essent hominibus etiam in Paradiso honorabiles nuptiae et torus immaculatus. . . ."

Paradise, would have had increase, but without lust, if sin had not arisen.”¹

Finally, St. Augustine expressly retracted the idea that there would have been no sexual generation apart from the Fall.²

The idea that sexual coition would not have taken place had there been no Fall continued, however, to be favoured by some Fathers, and in particular, it seems to have been held by St. John Chrysostom³ and by St. John Damascene.⁴ St. Jerome’s name has also been mentioned in this connection, and in one of his letters to Eustochium (Epist. XXII, De custodia virginitatis, 19) he certainly uses language which seems to imply this view. But in Book I of his work *Contra Jovinianum* he allows that the matter is an uncertain one, while preferring the view that the use of sex was allowed only in consequence of the Fall.⁶

With the decline of the Origenist school, this strange theory was gradually abandoned, and the Catholic position came to be that already set forth by St. Augustine, and later on given its final expression by St. Thomas Aquinas thus:

1 De Civitate Dei, Lib. XIV, cc. xxi-xxiii.

2 Retractationes. Lib. I, c. 10, 13, 19, and Lib. II, cap. 22.

3 Horn. XVIII in Genesis, cap. 4. We quote this passage later on Cf. p. 143.

4 De Fide Orthod., Lib. II, cap. 30, and Lib. IV, cap. 25.

6 In his Fetter to Eustochium, St. Jerome emphasises the fact that sexual union took place only after the Fall, and that it was only then that the command to “increase and multiply” took effect: “The command to increase and multiply first finds fulfilment after the expulsion from Eden, after the nakedness and the figleaves which speak of matrimonial passion. Let those marry and be given in marriage who eat their bread in the sweat of their brow, whose land brings forth thorns and thistles, and whose crops are choked with briars” (“*Crescite et multiplicamini*”: hoc expletur edictum post paradysum et nuditatem, et ficus folia auspicantia pruriginem nuptiarum. Nubat et nubatur ille qui in sudore faciei comedit panem suum, cui terra tribulos et spinas generat, et cujus herba senibus suffocatur”,—Ad Eustochium, 19). Hence Suarez remarks: “Hieronymus, Ep. 22 ad Eustochium . . . saepe indicat usum conjugii per peccatum fuisse introductum.” (De opere sex dierum. Lib V, caput 1). Similarly, in his *Contra Jovinianum*, St. Jerome says: “As regards Adam and Eve, we must maintain that before the Fall they were virgins in Paradise, but that after they sinned and were cast out of Paradise, they were immediately married” (I. 16: “De Adam et Eve illud dicendum, quod ante offensum in paradiso virgines fuerint, post peccatum autem et extra paradysum, protinus nuptiae”). In the same work, I, 29, St. Jerome puts forward the view mentioned in the text: “Si objeceris, antequam peccarent, sexum viri et feminae fuisse divisum, et absque peccato eos potuisse conjungi;—quid futurum fuerit incertum est. . . . Hoc quod factum est, in propatulo est, quod in paradiso virgines permanserunt, ejecti de paradiso copulati sunt. Aut quid nocebit, si paradysus nuptias recipit et nulla est inter maritatum virginemque diversitas, etiam in paradiso eos ante sociari? Ejiciuntur de paradiso, et quod ibi non fecerunt, in terra faciunt, ut statim a principio conditionis humanae virginitatem paradysus, et terra nuptias dedicaverit.” Suarez comments thus: “Ex quo videtur conjecturam facere non fuisse futurum usum nuptiarum in Paradiso.”

There would seem to be an echo of this strange view in Prummer, who writes: “Juxta praesentem rerum ordinem, actus conjugalis est unicum medium propagandi genus humanum” (*Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, Vol. III, p. 489, italics ours).

“Some ancient doctors, in view of the stain of concupiscence which is found in coition in the present state of things, said that in the state of innocence there would not have been generation by sexual coition. . . . But this is not reasonable. For those things which are natural to man were neither taken away nor given through sin. Now, it is manifest that it is natural for man to generate by sexual coition, like the other higher animals, for man has animal life, and had it before the Fall. This is shown by the possession of natural members destined for this use. Hence we must not say that there would have been no use of these natural members before the Fall, but rather that they would have been used then, as were other members.

“In coition according to the present state of things, we must distinguish two features. One, which is natural, is the sexual conjunction of male and female for the purpose of generation. . . . The other is a certain deformity consisting in immoderate concupiscence. This latter would not have been present in the state of innocence, for then the lower powers were altogether subject to reason.”¹

We must add that, though unbridled lust and immoderate concupiscence would not have been present in the state of innocence, St. Thomas holds that there would have been even more pleasure in the sex act than there is at present. He makes this statement when dealing with the objection that in sexual union man becomes like to the brute beasts because of the vehemence of the pleasure attached to the act. Here is his reply:

“There would not then have been less pleasure, as some people have asserted. Rather, the sense pleasure would have been all the greater, inasmuch as man’s nature was then purer, and his body capable of more exquisite sensations.”²

¹ Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2: “Quidam antiquorum doctorum, considerantes concupiscentiae foeditatem quae invenitur in coitu, in isto statu, posuerunt quod in statu innocentiae non fuisset generatio per coitum. . . . Sed hoc non dicitur rationabiliter. Ea enim quae sunt naturalia homini, neque subtrahuntur neque dantur homini per peccatum. Manifestum est autem quod homini secundum animalem vitam, quam etiam ante peccatum habebat . . . naturale est generate per coitum, sicut et caeteris animalibus perfectis; et hoc declarant naturalia membra ad hunc usum deputata. Et ideo non est dicendum quod usus horum membrorum naturalium non fuisset ante peccatum, sicut et caeterorum membrorum. Sunt igitur in coitu duo consideranda secundum praesentem statum. Unum quod naturae est, scilicet conjunctio maris et feminae ad generandum. . . . Aliud autem quod considerari potest est quaedam deformitas immoderatae concupiscentiae, quae in statu innocentiae non fuisset, quando inferiores vires omnino rationi subdebantur.”

² “Non quia esset minor delectatio secundum sensum, ut quidam dicunt (fuisset enim tanto major delectatio sensibilis, quanto esset purior natura, et corpus magis sensibile).” Ibid., ad 3.

Thus does St. Thomas exclude from the state of innocence anything approximating to the sin of insensibility!

He is not alone in holding that the pleasure of sex would have been more intense in the state of innocence, for St. Albert the Great makes a similar statement in his Commentary on the Sentences, Lib. IV, Dist. 26, art. 7.

There is one difficulty which might be urged against this whole conception, and that is the fact, plain in all Tradition, that Adam and Eve did not actually have sexual intercourse before the Fall. St. Augustine considers this difficulty in *De Genesi ad litteram*. Lib. IX, cap 4. He suggests that one might reply in either of two ways. One might hold that the Fall took place almost immediately after the formation of Eve. Or secondly, we may also answer that God had not as yet commanded Adam and Eve to come together. "For why should they not await the Divine command in this matter, seeing that no concupiscence impelled them to the act?"

St. Thomas Aquinas in turn repeats this twofold explanation:

"As St. Augustine remarks, the reason why our first parents did not come together in Paradise was that, a short while after the formation of woman, they were ejected from Paradise on account of their sin. Or else the reason was that they were awaiting the divine authority for the fixed time to come together. For it was from this Divine authority that they received all their instructions."¹

In any case, these great Christian Doctors agree in holding that sexual generation by Adam and Eve would not have been sinful before the Fall: on the contrary, had there been no Fall, the human race would have been propagated precisely by this method.

The suggestion, however, that in actual fact Adam and Eve did not consummate their marriage until after the Fall had taken place, may present some difficulty, and it deserves further consideration. We must bear in mind, to begin with, that by the gift of integrity, the sexual appetite, like all sense appetites, was completely under the control of the reason and will. It is surely not impossible that, as we find in animals to-day, generation would then have been confined to certain seasons of the year. In this connection, it is interesting to note that, in his *Pelican* book. *The Physiology of Sex*, Mr. Kenneth Walker remarks that "most of the higher animals have a strictly

¹ "Sicut Augustinus dicit, ideo primi parentes in paradiso non coierunt, quia formata muliere, post modicum, propter peccatum de paradiso ejecti sunt; vel quia expectabatur divina auctoritas ad determinatum tempus commixtionis, a qua acceperunt universale mandatum."—*Ibid.*, ad. 2.

limited breeding season: only at the time of fruit; are the males capable of fertilising, or the females capable of conceiving.” He adds that “human sexuality is not subject to the marked seasonable rise and fall to which that of most of the animal world is bound,” but allows that “this does not mean that human desire always remains at the same level. The sexual drive waxes and wanes like a bonfire fanned by a wind.” Then he remarks that “savage man would even appear to retain some vestige of that seasonal rise and fall that is seen in the animal world, and in widely separated parts of the globe, erotic festivals have usually been held in spring or at harvest time.” He also mentions that “several observers, and especially Havelock Ellis, have brought forward evidence of an annual cycle of involuntary sexual activity in men, with peaks in the spring and in the early autumn.” Further, “some investigators have even tried to prove that man, like woman, is bound to a lunar cycle, and have suggested that this is a relic of a distant age, when organic life first appeared on the shores of great inland seas and lakes where it was subject to the tidal influence of the moon” (pp. 63-65).

Fr. Humphrey Johnson in his work, *The Bible and the Early History of Mankind*, similarly says that “it is not unlikely that in early times, man experienced the procreative instinct only at a certain season of the year, and that human nature has undergone progressive derangement in this regard, failure to restrain the impulse within the bounds of right reason having increased its intensity” (p-43)-1

If, then, the Fall took place before the advent of the season for procreation, as may quite well have been the case, there would be nothing strange in the fact that Adam and Eve had not consummated their marriage when they fell.

We have already mentioned the interesting Patristic idea, set forth especially by St. Theophilus of Antioch, St. Irenaeus, and St. Methodius of Olympus, that Adam was a child (*neepios*), and comparatively undeveloped. We have also mentioned that St. Augustine does not altogether reject the idea that Adam may have passed through a stage of childhood and adolescence. We see no reason why the same might not be true of Eve. In that case, there would have been good reasons why the marriage between them should not have been consummated immediately. It could, of course, be objected that this theory of the “childhood” of Adam and Eve cannot be harmonised with the doctrine of Adam’s infused knowledge, or with the fact that Adam and Eve were sufficiently developed morally to be capable of sin. But, as we have remarked, there is no

1 It is, however, not easy to see how this idea can be reconciled with the monthly occurrence of ovulation in women.

need to exaggerate the extent of Adam's knowledge, and a child who has come to the use of reason, is capable of sin, though not of reproducing his kind.

Some modern non-Catholic writers advocate the "childhood" theory of Adam and Eve because they think it lends itself to the interpretation that, in fact, the first human beings were devoid of any moral sense, and that the knowledge of good and evil were acquired only through the Fall. We shall discuss this interpretation of the third chapter of Genesis later. In any case, the "childhood" theory does not really involve these consequences, as we have remarked.

Even so, there are obvious difficulties in regarding Adam as a mere child. The writer of the article on *PechS* originel in the *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique* points out that "Adam knew himself to be distinct from the animals; he was aware of the origin, nature and object of conjugal life; he understood the divine prohibition; he knew what was meant by a moral test." Yet this writer adds that there are "some resemblances between the state of innocence of the first man, and the state of spiritual childhood. The first couple, whatever may have been the extent of their knowledge of the married state, show themselves as lacking in experience, with eyes closed to things of sense, and in fact like children. The first temptation, the first sin, show them to have been naive, credulous and imprudent, and they excuse themselves as children do" (Vol. XII, col. 284). So there may be that amount of truth at least in the "childhood" theory.

CHAPTER THREE

VIRGINITY AND CONTINENCE IN THE STATE OF INNOCENCE

In the preceding chapter, we have argued that in the state of innocence the human race would have been propagated, as now, by sexual generation, and we have found very strong support for this both in Scripture and Catholic Tradition. The fact that Adam and Eve did not in reality have sexual relations prior to the Fall is not in itself a grave objection against this view. The absence of such sexual relations in the historical state of innocence renders any further discussion of the subject rather theoretical. Yet, in view of the fact that God originally intended man to continue in the state of innocence, and in view of the further fact that that state should still be regarded as the ideal, towards which we, who exist in the fallen state but have been redeemed by Christ, should approximate as far as possible, it will be of interest to see how St. Thomas Aquinas, following St. Augustine, develops the subject of sex-life as it would have existed had the state of innocence continued. We shall find that he makes some surprising statements.

First, then, St. Thomas expressly asserts that, in the state of innocence, the virtue of continence would have found no place, and in fact it would not have been laudable at all. He adds that continence is laudable in our own time, not because it involves the absence of fecundity, but rather in spite of this. It is praiseworthy now, simply because it effectively opposes inordinate lust. In the state of innocence, the appetites were under the strict control of reason and will, and fecundity would have been possible without inordinate lust, and accordingly, continence would have had no *raison d'être*. St. Thomas's exact words are worth quoting. He is answering the objection that the sexual act renders a man particularly like to the animals, by reason of the strength of the pleasure attached to it, and further, continence is praiseworthy by which men abstain from such pleasures. Part of St. Thomas's reply has already been quoted in another connection. But it is of such importance that we must now give it in full:

“Animals lack reason. Hence, a man becomes like to the beasts in sexual coition because the pleasure of the act and the heat of concupiscence cannot be moderated by reason. But in the state

of innocence, there would have been nothing of that kind not moderated by reason. This does not mean that there would then have been less pleasure in the senses, as some say, for in point of fact the sense pleasure would have been so much greater in that nature was then purer, and the body capable of keener sensations. But the strength of desire would not then have exalted itself in so inordinate a way over pleasure of this kind, regulated as it was by reason. This implies, not that there would be less pleasure in the senses, but that the urge of desire should not immoderately inhere in this pleasure. When I say ‘immoderately’, I have in mind the measure of reason. Thus one who eats in moderation has no less pleasure than one who is greedy, but his desire dwells less on pleasure of this kind. This is the meaning of the words of Augustine, who excludes from the state of innocence, not the greatness of the pleasure, but the heat of desire and the unrest of the soul. Hence, continence would not have been laudable in the state of innocence, whereas it is praiseworthy at the present time—not indeed on account of the consequent absence of fecundity, but on account of its removal of inordinate lust. But in that other state there would have been fecundity without lust.”¹

It will be of interest here to give the commentary on this passage written by the great theologian Sylvius, who occupied the Chair of Theology at the University of Louvain in the seventeenth century:

“St. Thomas says that in the state of innocence, continence would not have been laudable for the future, although now it is laudable, indeed more laudable than matrimony, as he teaches in *Ha Ilae*, q. 152, art. 4. For it is laudable now because it involves abstinence from inordinate lust, and renders a man free from the various cares and miseries of this world, and makes him more disposed for the contemplation of divine things.. But in the state of innocence there would have been fecundity without lust,

¹ *Summa Theologica*, I, q .98, art. 2, ad. 3: “Bestiae carent ratione. Unde secundum hoc homo in coitu bestialis efficitur, quia delectationem coitus et fervorem concupiscentiae ratione moderari non potest. Sed in statu innocentiae, nihil huiusmodi fuisset quod ratione non moderaretur; non quia esset minor delectatio secundum sensum, ut quidam dicunt (fuisset enim tanto major delectatio sensibilis, quanto esset purior natura, et corpus magis sensibile); sed quia vis concupiscibilis non ita inordinate se extulisset super huiusmodi delectatione regulata per rationem; ad quam non pertinet ut sit minor delectatio in sensu, sed ut vis concupiscibilis non immoderate delectationi inhaereat. Et dico ‘immoderate’, propter mensuram rationis; sicut sobrius in cibo moderate assumpto non minorem habet delectationem quam gulosus; sed minus ejus concupiscibilis super huiusmodi delectatione requiescit. Et hoc sonant verba Augustini, quae a statu innocentiae non excludunt magnitudinem delectationis, sed ardorem libidinis, et inquietudinem animi. Et ideo, continentia in statu innocentiae non fuisset laudabilis, quae in tempore isto laudatur, non propter defectum fecunditatis, sed propter remotionem inordinatae libidinis’. Tunc autem fuisset fecunditas absque libidine.”

without the cates which distract a man, without miseries and without any impediment to the contemplation of heavenly things. This is confirmed by the fact that at that time there would have been no turpitude in the conjugal act, and nothing disordered, and no trouble either as regards the wife, or children, or family matters; but there would have remained integrity of the flesh, and most chaste love of the spouses for each other, and unshaken faith, and there would have been the perpetual blessing of fecundity. This blessing would have been lacking to virgins, and it would not have been compensated by any other advantage. Hence marriage would have been more excellent than virginity—even than that virginity which is now more laudable than marriage. From this it follows that none would then have observed virginity, but all would have been joined in matrimony, and would have used this institution. For in a state like that they would not have observed that which is not laudable.”¹

It must be remembered that Sylvius wrote this after the Decree of the Council of Trent defining that the state of virginity is superior to the married state. Obviously he regarded that Decree as applying only to the present condition of mankind, and certainly not as teaching that, in any state and under all circumstances, virginity is superior to marriage. His view and interpretation of the Tridentine Decree has never, to my knowledge, been censured, and accordingly it may still be held.²

¹ “Ex his intelligi potest quod B. Thomas in resp. ad 3 ait, in statu innocentiae continentiam non futuram laudabilem, quamvis modo sit laudabilis, imo laudabilior matrimonio, ut Ha Ilae q. 152 art. 4 docetur. Ideo enim est nunc ita laudabilis, quia importat abstinentiam inordinatae libidinis, redditque hominem a variis hujus saeculi sollicitudinibus et miseriis liberum, et ad divinorum contemplationem magis dispositum. In statu autem innocentiae fuisset foecunditas absque libidine, absque sollicitudinibus hominem distrahentibus, sine miseriis et sine impedimento contemplationis rerum caelestium. Confirmatur, tunc temporis nulla omnino fuisset in actu conjugii turpitude, nihilque inordinatum, nulla in ipso conjugio molestia; vel circa conjugem, vel circa liberos, vel circa rem familiarem; permansisset autem carnis integritas, et ipsorum conjugum inter se amor castissimus, et fides intemerata, fuissetque perpetuum bonum foecunditatis, quo bono caruissent virgines absque compensatione alterius boni, ergo conjugium fuisset excellentius virginitate, etiam ilia quae modo est laudabilior conjugio. Unde sequitur quod tunc nulli servassent virginitatem, sed omnes juncti et usi fuissent matrimonio: non enim in eiusmodi statu servatari erant id quod non esset laudabile.” (In Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2).

² Thus, Browning’s statement in *The King and the Book*, though lacking in theological precision, is substantially correct:

Know, daughter, circumstances make or mar
 Virginity—’tis virtue or ’tis vice.
 That which was glory in the Mother of God
 Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve
 Created to be mother of mankind.
 Had Eve, in answer to her Maker’s speech,
 “Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth”—

We must add, however, that by no means all theologians are favourable to such ideas. Thus, Suarez sets forth St. Thomas's view, and simply rejects it: "Non placet."¹ But in spite of his opposition, we see no reason why we should not accept the opinion of the Angelic Doctor if we so wish.

In any case, these statements, made by Catholic theologians of the highest rank, and implying that continence and virginity are not desirable always and for their own sake, but are praiseworthy only in the present fallen state of mankind, and precisely because they set us free from inordinate lust, and in spite of the fact that they involve the sacrifice of fecundity, itself a blessing, deserve the most serious consideration.

As we shall see in the Third Part of this work St. Thomas teaches that, even now, virginity is only for certain people, and that others rightly undertake the duty of propagating the race. In this connection, it is true, St. Thomas sets forth certain advantages in the state of virginity, and one might think that these advantages would have held good also in the state of innocence, and would have justified the choice of virginity, at least by some people. But it is none the less true that, however strong these considerations urged on behalf of virginity are at the present time, for St. Thomas himself and also for Sylvius, they would not have justified the choice of virginity in the state of unfallen mankind. The explanation is presumably that, in the view we are considering, the chief advantage of virginity is that it sets us free from inordinate lust, and that the other advantages are only secondary to this. That chief consideration could not apply in the state of innocence, for there was then no inordinate lust. And evidently the other advantages would not have outweighed the very real disadvantage of the sacrifice of the blessing of fecundity.

All this is confirmed by St. Thomas's express statement that the children of Adam and Eve would all have had the power of sexual generation, and all would have exercised it.²

Pouted, "But I choose rather to remain
Single"—why, she had spared herself forthwith
Further probation by the apple and snake.
Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see—
If motherhood be qualified impure,
I catch you making God command Eve sin!

Book VII, lines 756-768.

In modern days the Rev. Dr. Ruland, Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at the University of Wurzburg, similarly asserts that "if sin had not carried into the human soul the discord between duty and desire, continence and virginity would have no value as virtues" (Pastoral Theology, p. 124).

¹ Commentary on Summa Theologica, in loc.

² "In statu innocentiae, uterque sexus per generationem productus fuisset. . . . Conveniebat quod omnes generarent. . . ." (Summa Theologica, I, q. 99, art. 2, ad. 3). Similarly Sylvius; "Nunc nulli servassent virginitatem, sed omnes juncti et usi fuissent matrimonio" (loc. cit.).

It will be noted that, in the passage we have been discussing (*Summa Theologica*, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 3), St. Thomas speaks of "continence" and not of "virginity", whereas Sylvius in his *Commentary* speaks of "virginity". The two terms are often very similar if not identical in meaning, as St. Thomas himself points out elsewhere (*Ha Ilae*, q. 155, art. 1). But, whereas continence signifies abstinence from all sexual pleasures, virginity may be used to imply physical integrity. In any case, St. Thomas allows, in the answer to another objection (art. 2, ad. 4), that in the state of innocence, human beings would have been conceived in sexual intercourse and would have been born in due course, without destroying the physical virginity of the wife and mother. He here repeats and adopts a statement made by St. Augustine in his *De Civitate Dei*, Lib. XIV, cap. 26:

"As Augustine says, Tn that state (of innocence), the husband would have penetrated the womb of his wife without any corruption of her (physical) integrity. For the male semen then would have been injected into the womb of the woman without affecting the integrity of the female organ of generation, just as now the menstrual flow is emitted from the womb of a virgin without affecting her physical integrity. For, just as in childbirth the female organs would have been relaxed in that state, not by painful groans but by motions of maturity, so also, for the purpose of conception, the two sexes would have been united together, not by lustful desire, but by the voluntary use of nature."¹

According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, then, physical virginity would not have been destroyed in the state of innocence, either by coition or by childbirth. And that is evidently why, in q. 98, art. 2, ad. 3, St. Thomas uses the term "continence" instead of "virginity".. He excludes continence from the state of innocence, but not virginity. According to St. Thomas, then, the continued existence of physical virginity would have been quite compatible with motherhood, and would have been a striking illustration of the immunity from pain and sorrow which was conferred upon our first parents, as a preternatural gift. Because of this, all mothers in the

¹ *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 4: "Sicut Augustinus dicit, in illo statu nulla corruptione integritatis infunderetur gremio maritus uxoris. Ita enim potuit utero conjugis, salva integritate feminei genitalis, virile semen immitti, sicut nunc potest, eadem integritate salva, ex utero virginis fluxus menstrui cruoris emitti. Ut enim ad pariendum non doloris gemitus sed maturitatis impulsus feminea viscera relaxaret, sic ad concipiendum non libidinis appetitus, sed voluntarius usus naturam utramque conjungeret." St. Thomas here somewhat abbreviates the text of St. Augustine, but the omissions are of no importance.

state of innocence would have been virgin mothers in the physical sense—a pregnant thought, to which we shall return later, when studying the Virginal Birth of Our Blessed Lord.

This striking and original physiological idea, originating in St. Augustine, was discussed by many other Scholastic writers, who evidently saw no irreverence or indecency in such a discussion. Thus, St. Albert the Great, in his *Summa Theologiae*, discusses the question: “Whether Eve, in the first state of mankind, would have conceived and brought forth incorruptly, and would have remained a virgin?” Here is the substance of his reply:

“Some old writers, namely Praepostine and William, have discussed this matter. They have distinguished between three kinds of corruption, namely, a break of continuity, a corruption by filth, and a corruption by some impurity. The first kind is that which takes place when a thing is divided. The corruption by filth comes from the itching of desire and lust. . . . The corruption by impurity is that which comes from the reception of some foreign matter. . . . These authors say that if Eve had come together with Adam in coitus, she would not have incurred the first two kinds of corruption. . . . But she would have incurred most certainly the third kind, for she would have had to conceive by means of the seed of another combined with her own. . . . This distinction is good enough.”¹

Then he remarks, in answer to an objection:

“In that state, the (female) channels would have been opened without pain and without laceration, simply by extension and relaxation.”²

Again, in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (Lib. IV, Dist. 26, art. 7), St. Albert maintains that there would have been no pain attached to childbirth in the state of innocence, for such pain is caused by the forcible extension of the natal passage, and the rupture or division of some of the membranes. To the objection that this would necessarily follow from the passage of a child of normal proportions, he

¹ “Responderunt aliqui, scilicet Praepostinus et Guillelm. Altiss. Distinxerunt enim triplicem corruptionem, scilicet continuitatis, foeditatis et impuritatis. Continuitatis quae est in divisione corporis. Foeditatis quae est in pruritie concupiscentiae et libidinis. . . . Impuritatis quae est in susceptione naturae alienae. . . . Dicunt quod si Eva convenissent cum Adam per coitum, non incurrisset primas duas corruptiones. . . . Sed incurrisset omni modum corruptionem impuritatis, quia oportuit quod conciperet ex semine alieno sibi permixto.... Et haec distinctio satis bona est” (*Summa Theologiae*, II, Tract. XIV, p. 84).

² “In illo statu aperte fuissent (viae) sine dolore et sine laceratione, per solam extensionem et laxationem.”—*Summa Theologiae*, loc. cit.

answers that the present extreme restriction of these parts is an effect of sin. In the state of innocence, on the contrary, the parts of the female body would have been proportioned to the children being born, in such a way that the offspring could be produced by an extension of the organs without any rupture or division.¹

This matter was also discussed by other Scholastic theologians, and in particular, as we learn from Suarez, by Durandus, Aegidius (presumably Giles of Rome), and Richardus (presumably Richard of Middleton), who all more or less favoured the idea defended by St. Augustine, St. Thomas and St. Albert the Great. Suarez himself, however, opposes it. He urges that conception, and a fortiori parturition without loss of physical virginity would involve a great miracle, and it would be altogether unreasonable to postulate such a miracle as constantly taking place in the state of innocence. He rejects the suggestion that the miracle could be avoided by the dilation of the hymen and birth channels.² But is the idea quite impossible? It would at least seem to deserve further consideration by competent authorities.

It may, indeed, be asked whether this strange idea, that motherhood would have involved no loss of physical virginity, is not to

¹ The objection was as follows: "Impossibile est nasci infantes debitae quantitatis sine divisione et extensione membri genitalis: ergo tunc impossibile fuisset parere sine dolore." Here is the reply: "Dolor nullus fuisset nec divisio, quia nimia extensio mulierum et arctatio provenit ex peccato, sed tunc fuissent membra proportionata nascentibus, ita ut per extensionem non dividenter corpus mulieris infantes potuissent profundi."—In IV Sent., Dist. 26, art. 7.

² Here is a summary of Suarez's discussion of the matter: "Non est simile de exitu sanguinis menstrui et de seminis ingressu. . . . Nam in corpore feminae, ut in sua integritate et naturali compositione nascitur, non est aliqua via expedita et aperta per quam ingredi possit (semen). . . . Non potest ilia commixtio et penetratio fieri naturaliter, nisi virginalis claustrum reseratur, sive per divisionem alicujus membranae, quae ante copulam erat continua et viam illam claudebat, sive per separationem et dissolutionem partium corporis feminae quae antea erant non solum contiguae sed etiam veluti conglutinatae et inter se copulatae. . . . In partu prolis conceptae, multo magis necessarium est claustrum virginalis aperiri: nihil ergo obesse posset quin in conceptione rumperetur. . . . Quod saltem in partu virginalis claustrum apertio fuerit necessaria, probatur quia exitus pueri ex virgine, integra manente matre, sine grandi miraculo fieri non potest, utique aut per corporum penetrationem aut per transitum corporis ab extremo ad extremum sine praesentia in medio. At vero, tale miraculum perpetuum in statu innocentiae fingere nec fundamentum habet, neque videtur veresimile.

"Dicunt vero aliqui potuisse per solam partium et pororum matemi corporis dilationem infantem de utero matris exire sine integritatis ejus diminutione. Quod tradit Durandus in II Dist. 20, q. 2 as x, et clarius in IV Dist. 44, q. 6 ad 1., ubi de virginitate Mariae in partu eodem modo sentit. . . .

"Dicit Aegidius, et probabile putat Richardus, licet signaculum virginalis aperiretur vel in conceptione divideretur, et partu, non tamen permanenter sed solum quasi in fieri, quamdiu copula vel nativitas durarent, illis vero transactis, statim partem illam ad suam integritatem fuisse redituram. . . . (Sed) id naturale non est, ut constat." (In Summa S. Thomae, Joe. cit.).

As to the suggestion that such an explanation might be applied to the Virgin Birth of Christ, Suarez altogether rejects it: "haereticus esset." We return to this particular matter in another chapter.

some extent based upon an undue exaltation and esteem for merely physical integrity, and it may be further asked whether there is any adequate reason for postulating this strange physiological hypothesis. Why should the breaking of the virginal hymen by intercourse and motherhood be regarded as incompatible with the state of innocence?

This is certainly a difficult question, and we cannot pretend to answer it adequately. But one thing is certain, and that is that the two great doctors, St. Augustine and St. Thomas, who advanced this hypothesis, did not themselves display any undue esteem for merely physical virginity. St. Augustine, in his *De Civitate Dei*, remarks over and over again that true chastity is in the will, not in the body, and he displays great reluctance to extend any approval to those virgins in the early Church who did away with themselves rather than suffer the physical violation of their chastity. He can only suggest they did so in obedience to a special divine command.¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, in his turn, asserts that the physical integrity of a maid is only accidentally connected with virginity regarded as a virtue.² He adds that if this integrity is lost otherwise than by deliberate pleasure in sexual activity, true virginity suffers no prejudice thereby.³ Yet both St. Augustine and St. Thomas obviously went to extreme lengths to safeguard physical integrity in the state of innocence. We can only suggest that, traditionally, virginal integrity had always been so highly esteemed that these great doctors thought it must by some means be reconciled with married life in that state, and accordingly set forth the hypothesis we have been considering.

There remains one other interesting point. From the fact that all human beings would have married in the state of innocence, and have had children, St. Thomas infers that there would have been an equal number of males and females generated (*Summa Theologica*, I, q. 99, art. 2, ad. 3). In his *Commentary on St. Thomas*, Sylvius mentions St. Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences*, and sets forth the matter in these words:

“As the distinction of the sexes was made for the sake of the multiplication of the human race and the filling up of the number of the elect, this multiplication would have been the duty of all, but only in the state of matrimony, in which one man would have had only one wife. Hence there would have been as many women

¹ *De Civitate Dei*, Lib. I, c. xxv.

² “*Integritas membri corporalis per accidens se habet ad virginitatem.*”—*Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. clii, art. I.

³ “*Si contingat quod per alium modum aliquo casu membri integritas corrumpatur, non magis praejudicat virginitati quam si corrumpatur manus aut pes.*”—*Summa Theologica*, loc cit., ad. 3.

as men, no woman would have lacked a husband, and no man a wife, nor would one woman have belonged to many men, or many women to one man” (In Summa, I, q. 98, art. ii).

We note here that the only purpose of the distinction between the sexes is the multiplication of the species. Sylvius, following St. Bonaventure, carries this doctrine to its logical conclusion, thus:

“It also follows that, every time a man knew his wife, the latter would conceive a child. For they would never have used matrimony except for the end for which it was instituted, namely, the generation of children, and there would then have been no sterility.”¹

This statement would seem to imply that the marriage act has as its only end the procreation of children, and is lawful only when it results in that end. But though some such doctrine was previously widely held by some Catholic theologians, it is not the view approved by the Church, nor is it taught by theologians to-day. We shall discuss this matter in its proper place.

¹ A similar view was put forward by Durandus, Aegidius and Richardus. Cf. Suarez, loc. at., who tersely remarks that this view is not a convincing one: “non convincit.”

CHAPTER FOUR

OTHER FEATURES OF THE STATE OF INNOCENCE

Following the great St. Augustine in his bold speculations, St. Thomas Aquinas discusses some other aspects of the state of innocence, and though these are not immediately connected with the subject of this book, it will be of interest to glance at them, in view of the two principles we have enunciated, namely, that the state of innocence was the one intended by God for mankind, and secondly, that in our redeemed state we should try to approximate to the former as far as possible.

First, then, St. Thomas discusses the dominion which man would have had over the animal creation. He does this in his *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 96. He remarks that all animals are naturally subject to man, and adds that this is shown firstly from the order of origin of living things. For this order goes from the imperfect to the more perfect, and the latter makes use of the former. Thus, the earth first appeared, and then plants, which need the earth. Next came animals, which need plants, which are thus subject to the animal world. Finally we get man, created after the other animals, as their lord and master. Accordingly, Aristotle wrote that the hunting of wild animals is right and natural, for thereby man is claiming what is naturally his. The second argument is that Providence has arranged that the higher should always govern the lower. The third argument is based upon man's superiority: man possesses the virtue of prudence in a universal manner, whereas animals possess only a certain participation of it by animal instinct.

The second objection and its answer are particularly interesting. The objection urges that the mutual discord existing between animals, such as the sheep and the wolf, shows that they could not all be brought under man's dominion. In reply, St. Thomas remarks that some have said that animals which are now ferocious and kill others would have been meek and gentle in the time of innocence, not only towards men but also towards other animals. This, however, is, in the opinion of the Angelic Doctor, "altogether unreasonable". For the nature of animals has not been changed through the sin of man, and we need not suppose that animals which now naturally eat the flesh of others, such as lions and falcons, would then have lived on herbs. . . . Accordingly, there would then have

been a natural discord between certain animals. But this would not mean that they would not be subject to the control of man, any more than their present discord removes them from the rule of God, whose Providence arranges all these things. In the state of innocence, indeed, man would have been the executor of this Providence as we now find in the case of domestic animals, for hens are given by men to domestic falcons for food.

St. Thomas goes on to say, in the answer to the third difficulty, that even so, man in the state of innocence did not require animals for his bodily needs. He did not require them for clothing, for man was naked but not ashamed, as he was free from any inordinate movement of concupiscence. Nor did he then need animals for food, for he was able to feed on the fruits of the trees of Paradise. He did not need animals to carry or draw him, for he was strong in body. On the other hand, he needed animals in the sense that he had to obtain experimental knowledge of them in order to find out their natures.

In article 3 of q. 96, St. Thomas says that there would have been certain inequalities in the race of unfallen men. They would have differed in sex, and in age, and in mind they would have differed in justice and knowledge. Man was not obliged to work, but would have done so according to his free will, and he could equally freely apply his mind to doing or willing some particular thing or acquiring some particular knowledge. From the physical standpoint also there would have been differences. For the human body was not then entirely independent of the operation of the laws of nature, and thus some would tend to be stronger than others, or bigger, or more beautiful, or better formed. But at the same time there would have been no defect or sin in any individual.

To the objection that men love each other more if there is perfect equality, St. Thomas replies that there can be a greater love between those who are unequal than between those who are equal. Thus, a father by nature loves his son more than a man loves his brother, and this is not affected by the fact that the love of a son for his father is not so great as the father's love for his son.

In his answer to the third difficulty, St. Thomas allows that this natural inequality might have resulted in a difference in degree of reward by God, and says that the beauty of order would have been increased thereby.

In article 4, St. Thomas discusses whether, in the state of innocence, man would have had dominion over other men. He says that there would have been no dominion such as that of a master over slaves, but one man could have ruled over other free men, and

this would have been the case, for man is naturally a social animal, and life in society requires a ruler. Moreover, as we have seen, there would have been certain inequalities in the matter of justice and knowledge, and these inequalities would have had undesirable results unless all were controlled for the common good.¹

One of the objections discussed by St. Thomas had urged that it was as a result of sin that Eve was placed under the domination of her husband Adam. St. Thomas does not trouble to give a special reply: he considers that the principles he has enunciated suffice. Evidently, then, he held that there was a difference in the relation between Adam and Eve before the Fall and after. In the state of innocence, Eve was subject to Adam freely, in a kind of benevolent association. After the Fall, Eve was subjected more strictly to Adam, and less willingly.

¹ St. Thomas's doctrine is clearer than that of St. Augustine. Some have interpreted the latter's phraseology, especially in the *De Civitate Dei*, as implying that in the state of innocence there would have been no authority at all of one man over others. Some have also attributed to St. Augustine the theory that in the state of innocence there would have been no private property, but that all goods would have been held in common. Others, while admitting that St. Augustine's language is not always clear, repudiate this interpretation as unjustified. In any case, St. Thomas's own mind is quite plain. There would have been some authority in the state of nature of man over man, and also a certain authority of husband over wife, but it would not have been a despotic authority.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GOLDEN AGE AND EARLY TRADITIONS

The Biblical account of man's origin makes it plain that the happy condition of our first parents in paradise lasted only for a brief space of time. It was succeeded, as we shall see, by a much sadder state of things. But, though it was so short, we might well expect that the human race would have preserved at least a vague idea of the happy state it once enjoyed. And strangely enough, those who have made a study of human traditions tell us that in fact there is a very widespread belief in a "golden age" of mankind at the beginning of things. These accounts vary much in matters of detail, and of themselves they could hardly provide a sufficient basis for belief in the primitive happiness of mankind. But, once we accept the account in Genesis as true, because it comes to us on God's authority, then we can at least appeal to these widespread traditions as confirming the Catholic doctrine on the subject. At least the Catholic doctrine gives us an adequate explanation of the existence of these traditions.

Here are some quotations from recent works on this interesting subject:

I. "The tradition of a golden age at the beginning of man's history is widespread: recent investigations have shown it to be almost universal. . . . The trend of historical research is to show that there is always some foundation of fact for ancient, deep-rooted and widespread traditions. But... the tradition, varying from race to race and tribe to tribe, is so much overgrown and corrupted by fable, myth and legend, that the core of truth, even if it could be with certainty discovered and determined, would be too slight and vague to be of any real use." (Dr. Miller, *Fall of Man*, p. 3.)

II. "Before we can answer the question whether the myths of a 'golden age' so widely diffused throughout the non-Christian world are distorted versions of that 'Fall' about which the Church teaches us, or whether they have originated in the inveterate tendency of mankind to regard the past as shrouded in a golden haze, and to contrast its present ills with the supposed bliss of former ages, it may be said that a most careful classification of them, and an inquiry into their geographical and racial distribution would have to be carried out. . . .

“Nevertheless, the belief that man’s relations with the Unseen are not normal is one which pervades all the religions of the world. This fact was recognised by William James.” (H. Johnson, *Anthropology and the Fall*, p. 40.)

III. “The state of bliss enjoyed originally by man in his religious communion with God not only survives in the memory of numerous primitive races, but also in the tradition of the Greeks, Romans, Persians and Babylonians. The detailed descriptions are obviously pictorial transcriptions of the peace of conscience and the state of ‘original justice’ which God bestowed on man, and which were forfeited by the first sin.” (Otto Karrer, *Religions of Mankind*, p. 140.)

IV. “The idea of a golden age as having preceded the present condition of the human race is frequent and vivid in the mythologies.” (Descamps, *Genie des Religions*, p. 349.)

To these testimonies we may add the following statement made by the late Abbot Vonier of Buckfast, in his essay in the Cambridge Summer School volume on Man, pp. 182 et seq:

“The vague remembrance of a time of perfect happiness has been always most persistent with man. It may be said that tradition is all in favour of an initial height of human happiness and perfection, followed by a gradual falling away from the ideal state. . . .

“The first poet who gives definite expression to those vague reminiscences of mankind is, as we all know, Hesiod, in his poem *Works and Days*; it is the oldest piece of literature in which we find the distinction of the ages of mankind into the periods of gold and silver, brass and iron.

“The golden age is, of course, the counterpart of the dogmatic faith in man’s primeval innocence.... In this old mythology, the golden age is always identified with the rule of Saturn, whilst inferior ages are the productions of Zeus, as if mankind remembered that the relationship between God and man was profoundly altered. . . . There is a vast amount of literature concerning the mythology of the golden age, and it is certain that moral factors play a large part in those retrospective Utopias of Greek and Roman imagination; if the poets do not make sin directly responsible for the termination of the golden age, that happy period was at least admittedly recognised by them to have been without sin or injustice, whilst moral evil is to be found as the sad characteristic of all other times. At the end of the classical period we have Ovid’s wonderful description of the past history

of mankind: 'The golden age came first, which without any avenger or the constraint of law, of its own accord practised faith and justice. Fear and punishment were yet unknown . . . but all lived in perfect security, nor wanted the authority of a ruler. . . . Nations, peaceable and secure, lived in soft tranquillity, without the help of the soldier. The earth, too, of herself, untouched by the harrow, nor wounded by plough-shares, plentifully furnished all kinds of fruit.. .. There an eternal spring reigned—

“ ‘But when the world came to be under Jupiter . . . the silver age succeeded. . . . Jupiter shortened the duration of the ancient spring, and divided the year by four seasons... . Then first the parched air began to glow with sultry heats, and ice and snow hung, bound by the cold winds. Then first men sought shelter in houses; their houses were caves, and thick shrubs, and twigs tied together with bark. Then were the seeds of Ceres first buried in long furrows, and oxen groaned beneath the heavy yoke.

“ ‘To these succeeded the third . . . a generation of brass, of a fiercer make, and more prompt to horrid feats of war. . . .

“ ‘The last was of hard and stubborn iron. . . .’ ”

The learned Abbot then comments on these legends as follows:

“The fundamental difference between Genesis and mythology lies in this, that the inspired account of man’s history limits the golden age to the first human couple, and to a definite setting of time and place. . . . Legend, on the contrary, makes of it an age, a definite period of human history, during which all men were perfect. The difference is, of course, significant. Genesis makes a greater appeal to our intellect than does mythology. . . . Mythology, being of man, makes into an immense phenomenon of the natural order that which was in reality a gratuitous grace of God.”

The traditions we have mentioned so far are often accompanied by a tradition of a Fall. These are usually very vague as to details. But at least we can say there is a very widespread tradition that the present condition of the human race is not what it should be, or what it was meant to be. As. Fr. H. Johnson remarks, the Semites may have inherited an independent tradition of the Fall, many individual features of which find their parallels in ethnic traditions.¹ Fr. Johnson quotes William James to the effect that—

“There is a certain uniform deliverance, in which all religions appear to meet. It consists of two parts:

1. an uneasiness, and

¹ Anthropology and the Vail, p. 40.

2. its solution.

1. The uneasiness, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand.

2. The solution is a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connections with the higher powers" *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1909, p. 508).

Echoes of this may be found in Plato, for he asserts in the *Timaeus* that "the nature and faculties of man have been changed and corrupted since his origin." Again, Cicero writes thus:

"The troubles and calamities of human life have led the ancient priests or diviners, charged with the task of explaining the mysteries to initiates, to assert that we were born in this miserable state only in order to expiate some great fault committed in a better life, and it seems to me that there is some truth in this."¹

It is certainly difficult to believe that man in his present condition is as he was meant to be. No one has set forth this difficulty plainer than Cardinal Newman in his *Apologia*.

"To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man; their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises; their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, 'having no hope, and without God in the world'—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

"What shall we say to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer that, either there is no Creator, or this

¹ Hortensius. Other traditions of the Fall are set forth, e.g., by Chanvillard, *Le phyl'le originel*, pp. 167-194.

living society of men is in a true sense discarded from his presence. Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birthplace, or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one of whom, from one cause or another, his parents were ashamed. Thus only should I be able to account for the contrast between the promise and the condition of his being. And so I argue about the world: if there be a God, since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact, a fact as true as the fact of its existence; and thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God.”¹

All this has been echoed and re-echoed by great thinkers throughout the ages. In our own times, several Presidents of the British Association have in their annual addresses lamented the fact that man’s progress in scientific achievement has far outstepped his moral progress, and that each new discovery has only too often been turned to destructive and immoral uses rather than to the promotion of the true well-being of the human race.

This moral weakness of mankind is nowhere more patent than in the matter of sex. We shall in a later chapter examine this subject in more painful detail. But unchastity, rape, incest, adultery and other forms of sexual immorality are too widespread to allow any of us to forget their existence. All this calls for an explanation. Why is it that man, who is so much superior to the animals in intellect and will, is often far below them in matters of conduct? Is it not strange that civilised man often indulges in vices which are unknown to simple savages? “Sin” may not be a fashionable word, but the reality of wrongdoing cannot be gainsaid. What is the ultimate reason for the corrupt state of the human race? That is the problem, which requires an answer.

One answer—in fact the only satisfactory answer—is provided by the doctrine of the Fall. Man is not now what he was at first, or what he was meant to be. In the Christian religion, this doctrine is given a concrete form in the account in Genesis of the sin of Adam and Eve, as interpreted and developed in the long history of Jewish and Christian tradition.

We will proceed to examine the narrative in Genesis in the next chapter.

¹ *Apologia*, ch. v.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SIN OF ADAM AND EVE, ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF GENESIS

We must now begin our discussion of the Fall of Man, with special reference to its connection with matters of sex.

First we give a translation of the text of the relevant portion of Genesis, taking the Douay Version as our basis, but modifying it where necessary to bring it into line with the Hebrew original.

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the field which Jahveh Elohim had made. And he said to the woman: ‘Yea, hath Elohim said: “You shall not eat of any tree of the Garden?”’ And the woman said unto the serpent: ‘Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, Elohim said: “You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.”’

And the serpent said to the woman: ‘You shall not die the death; for Elohim knoweth that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as Elohim, knowing good and evil.’

And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and fair to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed together figleaves, and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the voice of Jahveh Elohim walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the face of Jahveh Elohim, amidst the trees of the garden.

And Jahveh Elohim called unto the man, and said to him: ‘Where art thou?’

And he said: ‘I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’

And he said: ‘Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?’

And the man said: ‘The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.’

And Jahveh Elohim said to the woman: 'What is this thou hast done?'

And the woman said: 'The serpent deceived me, and I did eat.'

And Jahveh Elohim said unto the serpent: 'Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above all the beasts of the field; upon thy belly thou shalt go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.'

And unto the woman he said: 'I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception: in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be towards thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.'

And unto the man he said: 'Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree concerning which I commanded thee saying: "Thou shalt not eat of it," cursed is the ground on thy account, with toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth, for out of it thou wast taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.'

And the man called the name of his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And Jahveh Elohim made for the man and his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.

And Jahveh Elohim said: 'Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, let him not put forth his hand, and take of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever.'

And Jahveh Elohim sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man, and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim and the flame of the sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

And the man knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain. And she said: 'I have gotten a man with (the help of) Jahveh.' "

As to the interpretation of this narrative as a whole, we must apply to it in the first place the principles laid down by the Biblical Commission concerning the first three chapters of Genesis. In other words, we must hold that we have here an account of things which really happened, and not mere fables, myths, or allegories. And in particular we must keep to the "literal historical sense" of these chapters so far as they relate, amongst other matters, the "foundations of the Christian religion", which include "the precept given

by God to man to test his obedience, the transgression of the divine precept at the instigation of the devil under the guise of a serpent, the fall of our first parents from their primeval state of innocence, and the promise of a future Redeemer.” Nevertheless, the “literal historical sense” does not mean that we must take all words or phrases in their “proper sense”. On the contrary, some forms of speech may be obviously either metaphorical or anthropomorphical, or again reason may forbid us to adhere to the “proper sense”, or necessity may compel us to abandon it.¹

Thus, the narrative certainly tells us of a historic fact, namely, a divine command given to our first parents, the transgression of this command at the instigation of the Devil in the guise of a serpent, and the consequent loss by man of his primeval innocence. At the same time there may be metaphors and anthropomorphisms in the language, and we may have to reject the “proper sense” of words and phrases for other reasons.

The account itself speaks of a sin of disobedience which took the form of the eating of the fruit of a forbidden tree, the “tree of knowledge of good and evil,”² motivated by the desire to be “as gods (elohim), knowing good and evil”. Is there some metaphor here, or must we understand the command to refer to the literal eating of the fruit of a tree? That is a matter which is left open. We can only say that there is nothing in the narrative itself to indicate that a metaphorical tree is in the writer’s mind, rather than a literal one—unless some such indication is thought to be given by the name given to the tree itself, the “tree of knowledge of good and evil”. If there is a metaphor, the further question arises as to what is the reality signified by the metaphor, and here we must confess our ignorance. All we can say is that there was some act of disobedience to a divine command.³

¹ Cf. *Evolution of Theology*, pp. 7, 282-283. See also Appendix Three.

² By a strange lapse. Dr. Miller, in his otherwise excellent book on *The Fall of Man and Original Sin*, says (p. 20) that “God imposed upon him (Adam) the command to abstain from the tree of life-, Adam deliberately broke the command, and so sinned.” The account in Genesis, on the contrary, says explicitly that the tree which was the subject of the prohibition was not the tree of life, but the quite different “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”.

³ Dr. Miller writes as follows: “According to many accredited theologians and exegetes, it is not necessary to understand in a literal sense the prohibition against eating the fruit of some particular tree. We may take it, without offence, as a vivid but symbolical way of representing God’s command, which may have been of some wholly different character. But, on the other hand, there is no good reason compelling us to give up the literal interpretation of the narrative. Since God wished to try Adam by testing his obedience, by laying upon him some positive command over and above the natural law, it seems a matter of indifference what form the command should take, or what thing should be commanded or forbidden. And in view of the conditions of Adam’s life, it seems altogether suitable that the prohibition should fall upon the fruit of some one tree among the many whence he gained his sustenance” (*Fall of Man and*

It has, however, been suggested by some that the eating of the fruit of the tree is a metaphor for the performance of the sexual act. This “misunderstanding” is indeed widespread, as Canon Arendzen remarks in his paper, *Adam’s Sin*, in the Cambridge Summer School Lectures on Man. He continues:

“In the popular mind, this erroneous idea has taken very deep root, especially since the sixteenth century, amongst non-Catholics. Concupiscence being regarded as formal sin, the use of marriage must needs be also, only legalised, authorised, and not-imputed sin in those who are clothed in the merits of Christ.”¹

Canon Arendzen points out that “the Genesis story directly excludes the idea that Adam’s sin was the use of marriage, as it places the first use of it outside paradise,” and he also urges that “God, who created sex and commanded men to increase and multiply, could not without obvious contradiction make the use of it a sin.”

He goes on to mention “another idea, which is more specious,” namely, “that of some ancient Fathers, that Adam’s sin was one of disobedience in forestalling the time fixed by God for the use of marriage.” This idea, he remarks, “does not labour under the objections indicated above. God’s positive precept may conceivably have been to use marriage only at some specified time, or to postpone such use till God gave leave.” Even so, “this suggestion must remain the merest guess, without any support in the text, or rather implicitly excluded by the implication that Adam first consummated his marriage outside Paradise” (p. 106).

Certainly, as Canon Arendzen says, there is no direct suggestion in the text of Genesis itself to lead us to suppose that the first sin was the sexual act. And further, as the Canon urges, there are some powerful arguments, derived from the text itself, against any such view. The fact that Adam and Eve are recorded as having sexual relations only after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden forms a very strong argument against any interpretation which would see in the eating of the forbidden fruit a metaphor for the act of sex. This is strengthened by the fact that, in narrating the sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve after the Fall, Holy Scripture uses an expression which has ever since been adopted to signify sexual

Original Sin, p. 21). To this we may add that there would, in any case, be no need to suppose that a tree really had a mysterious power attached to its fruit enabling it to convey knowledge of good and evil. The name of the tree is sufficiently explained by the prohibition itself and the experimental knowledge of good and evil which followed from the disobedience to the divine command. See Appendix Three.

3pp. 195 et seq.

intercourse: "Adam knew his wife." Or, as we should say now, he had "carnal knowledge" of his wife. As that was evidently the phrase customarily used to signify sexual intercourse, there would be absolutely no reason to employ an altogether different figure of speech for the same act, such as the eating of the fruit of a tree.

We have already said that the latter expression may be a metaphor. Also, its metaphorical character might seem to be indicated by the expression, "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". Some modern Catholic writers accordingly urge that we have here an obvious metaphor for the acquisition of experimental knowledge of good and evil, by actual sin, as distinct from the theoretical knowledge of what is good and evil, i.e., right and wrong.¹

For Adam and Eve must have possessed this theoretical knowledge of right and wrong before they could sin. But there is no ground for supposing that this experimental knowledge, obtainable through sin, signifies the performance of the sexual act.

Some would urge that the very phrase used subsequently to express sexual relations, "Adam knew his wife", shows that the "knowledge of good and evil" associated with the tree signifies sexual knowledge. But this is quite an unnecessary inference. Its only basis seems to be the use of the same word "to know" in the two cases. But experimental knowledge of evil could be obtained by the commission of sin of any kind. We may go further, and urge that, in point of fact, the whole narrative seems to exclude any interpretation which would identify the experimental knowledge of good and evil with the sex act. For, firstly, when God forbids the eating of the fruit of this tree (Genesis ii, 17), he says that such eating will involve the penalty of death. It is difficult to see how the performance of the sex act by a man and his wife could involve any such penalty. The Devil, indeed, denies that such a penalty will result (iii, 4), and urges that instead, the eating of the fruit will open their eyes, "and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil". For such a temptation to be real, it must be a plausible one. How could the sex act itself be regarded as conferring upon human beings

¹ The writer of the article on *Pêche originel* in the *Diet. Theol. Cath.*, Vol. XII, cols. 275-287, and Professor Coppens of Louvain, writing in *Apologetique*, pp. 1060-1063, both, favour the interpretation of "knowledge of good and evil" as moral knowledge of an experimental character, as distinct from merely theoretical knowledge. They reject the suggestion that the phrase might mean intellectual culture or knowledge as such. That interpretation would certainly be absurd. Yet it has been advanced by some modern Rationalists as the real meaning of the narrative in Genesis, and these have been followed by N. P. Williams in his work. *Idea of the Fall and of Original Sin*. This author writes: "the sin of the first men consisted of snatching the treasure of scientific and cultural knowledge which the Creator had not destined for them." Against this we may urge with Coppens (*op. cit.*) that the knowledge referred to is obviously of a moral rather than of an intellectual character. Indeed, the phrase itself, "knowledge of good and evil", shows this.

knowledge such as belongs only to God himself? Especially in the actual circumstances? It seems much more reasonable to suppose that the temptation was to perform some act which would indeed confer the experimental knowledge of good and evil, such as necessarily results from the committing of any sin, but would certainly not result from the performance of the sex act by a man and his wife.¹

It might, however, be urged that the sexual interpretation of the narrative of the Fall is implied by the fact that, after the commission of the sinful act, and as a result of it, Adam and Eve realised that they were naked, and in their shame they hid themselves, and made aprons or girdles of figleaves. Have we not here, it is suggested, an obvious reference to the sense of shame which usually accompanies or follows the performance of the sexual act, especially if this is performed in a sinful manner? As to this, we must content ourselves with saying that the usual Catholic theological doctrine of the consequences of the Fall, explained in a later chapter, give an adequate reason why consciousness of nudity and shame resulted from the original sin, without postulating that this sin was the sexual act.

The above considerations apply, with the necessary allowances, to any theory which would see the sexual act in the sin of our first parents. Thus, they obviously constitute valid objections to the theory that, though Adam and Eve were indeed husband and wife, they were morally bound, by a divine command, to wait for definite instructions before performing the sex act, but failed to do so. It still remains true that Genesis records the performance of the sex act only after the expulsion from paradise, and the other objections set forth above are equally cogent against this form of the theory.

They would also apply to the idea that Adam and Eve were sexually immature at the time, being children, and that the first sin consisted in the attempted performance of the sexual act before maturity. It is indeed not impossible that Adam and Eve were at that time sexually immature, or were to some extent children, though this idea is an unlikely one. It is also true that there is good reason to think that in man there were originally two and only two special times in the year when the sexual urge manifested itself, or was practicable. But these considerations, taken in conjunction with

¹ There remains one curious point, and that is the origin of the phrase, "to know a woman", as signifying the sexual act. I have been unable to obtain any satisfactory explanation of this. I can only suggest that the phrase is, at any rate, not altogether unsuitable, for the sexual relationship gives a man a knowledge of a woman precisely as such, i.e., as one of the female sex, which it would be difficult to obtain otherwise. The sexual act reveals to a man the height and depth of a woman's sexual capacities which he might not otherwise even suspect.

the theological doctrine that Adam and Eve were endowed with the preternatural gift of immunity from concupiscence, would surely make it extremely unlikely that the first sin was in fact a sexual act.

We can thus conclude, with Pere Lagrange, that the identification of the original sin with the sex act, is "Comic opera exegesis".

It seems desirable here to give a brief account of the historical development of the exegesis of Genesis iii, with special reference to the origin of the sexual interpretation.

Jewish writers seem first to have indulged in speculations as to the origin of evil and sin towards the beginning of the Christian era. It was then, that, apparently for the first time, the suggestion was made that the sin of Adam and Eve was the sexual act.

Thus, in the Apocalypse of Abraham, according to N. P. Williams, "it seems to be implied that the first sin consisted in the physical union of Adam and Eve, who had apparently been meant by the Creator to live in perpetual continence."¹

The idea was put forward definitely for the first time, it would seem, by Philo, who, in his allegorical exegesis, "departs from the tradition of Jewish thought," as the writer of the article *Veche originel* in the *Diet. Theol. Cath.*, so truly remarks (Vol. XII, col. 313). Philo certainly maintains that the account of the Fall in Genesis is figurative, and that the sin of Adam was precisely a sexual act:

"Love came to Adam and Eve, and gave to both of them the desire to unite themselves to each other. This desire engendered that fleshly pleasure which is the source of all wickedness, and which changed their immortal and happy life into a mortal and unhappy one."²

Here we have the real source of this strange idea, which has so long influenced religious thought. Philo's ideas and methods were to some extent adopted by the Alexandrian school of exegesis, and especially by Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

Clement says that the sin of Adam and Eve was the exercise of the sex act. But he adds the interesting explanation that its sinfulness consisted in its being a premature use of marriage, against God's expressed will. We must also note that Clement adopts the idea already found in St. Irenaeus and others, namely, that Adam and

¹ Cf. N. P. Williams, *Fall and Original Sin*, p. 58. Dr. Williams thought he could find traces of this supposed sexual sin in other Jewish writings of the period, e.g., in the *Apocalypse of Baruch*. But in point of fact, this work seems to regard the "begetting of children" and the "passion of parents" as effects of the first sin, rather than as the first sin itself.

² *De opificio mundi*, 37,151.

Eve were in a state of childhood, both spiritually and physically. Such a state would naturally render the exercise of sex undesirable, even if it were possible. Here are Clement's own words:

"The first man enjoyed freedom in paradise, for he was a child of God. But when he succumbed to pleasure (for the serpent writhing on his stomach figuratively symbolises pleasure), he allowed himself to be led on by passion, and from a child he became a man, through his disobedience" (Protrepticon, xi).

"Adam and Eve were impelled to procreate children sooner than they should have done; and, being deceived through a ruse, they procreated while they were still young" (Strom., III, xvii).

"The first-formed man perchance anticipated our season, and, before the time of the grace of matrimony, experienced desire and committed sin" (Strom., III, 15, 94).

Commenting on these passages, Dr. N. P. Williams observes that, according to Clement, "the wickedness of this act consisted, not in its sexual nature, but in its prematurity... What he condemns is, not the appetite, but the unwillingness to wait for the time when the satisfaction of the appetite will have become legitimate" (Fall and Original Sin, p. 205).

We note that, in the final passage quoted, Clement advances his idea with some hesitation, introducing it with the word "perchance"—*pou*. In any case, earlier in the same passage, Clement asserts that "human generation is a created thing, and a creation of the Almighty, who assuredly would never depress the soul from a better to a worse state". Thus, this first Christian writer to hold that the sin of Adam and Eve was the sex act, is careful to safeguard the lawfulness of the act when performed in accordance with God's commands.

I have not been able to find the idea that the original sin of our first parents was the sexual act in any great Christian writer after Clement of Alexandria. Even Origen does not teach it. How, then, came it to be so widely accepted? There are many reasons which may have contributed to its popularity.

First,¹ we have the condemnation of the institution of marriage, which was not only a feature of some early heresies, such as that of the Encratic Gnostics, but was also implied, if not expressly taught in some of the Apocryphal Gospels. These, though in some cases heretical either in origin or in tendency, had a certain vogue amongst the faithful.

Secondly, we must mention the rise and spread of Manichaeism. The Manichees, as Canon Arendzen has written—

¹ Some of the matters referred to here are dealt with more fully later on in this work.

“regarded marriage as an evil in itself, because the propagation of the human race meant the continual re-imprisonment of the light substance in matter. . . . Maternity was a calamity and a sin, and Manichaeans delighted to tell of the seduction of Eve by Adam, and her final punishment.”¹

Now, the Manichaean doctrines were revived in the Middle Ages by the Cathari and the Albigensian heretics, who absolutely condemned marriage. The progress of these heretical ideas was alarming, and the Church had to take severe measures to counteract them. This being so, it is not impossible that there may have remained some traces of these ideas among the faithful.

Thirdly, the idea doubtless seemed to be supported by a false and unjustifiable inference from an exaggerated doctrine held by some Fathers and theologians, especially in the early Middle Ages, to the effect that the sex act is never performed without sin, because of the predominance of concupiscence over reason which accompanies it.

Lastly, we must mention the identification of concupiscence with sin by some medieval Augustinian theologians—an identification which prepared the way for the subsequent assertion by the Protestant Reformers that concupiscence is in fact sinful—an assertion echoed by the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church.² To this we may add the strange assertion, found in the Bishops' Book of Henry VIII, that the marriage act is “of itself damnable”,—an assertion which is modified in the King's Book into the statement that outside marriage it is unlawful. Of course, if concupiscence were really sinful and the exercise of the marriage act always or generally accompanied by sin, it would be easy, though doubtless illogical, to suppose that the sex act must have been the original sin of our first parents.

In any case, this strange doctrine has really no solid foundation, either in Scripture or in Catholic Tradition. The only Father to assert it was Clement of Alexandria, and his doctrines are not always in accordance with the Church's tradition. Moreover, even Clement, as we have said, was careful to safeguard the lawfulness of the marriage act itself.

We must further point out that the great Christian Fathers and mediaeval theologians who, following St. Augustine, were inclined to regard concupiscence as in some sense sinful, were nevertheless careful never to say, but rather at least implicitly to deny that the sin of our first parents was the sexual act. Here, for instance, is St.

¹ Article, Manichaeism, in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX, p. 593.

² “Concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin”,—Article IX. The Latin version has: *ratio peccati*.

Augustine's own description of the first sin: It consisted, he says, materially in the eating of the forbidden fruit, "the command to abstain from one fruit when there were so many others besides it being very easy to observe, and short to remember, especially as no lust then opposed the will" {*De Civitate Dei*, Lib. XIV, cap. xii). Formally, the sin emanated from the will: "There would have been no evil deed unless there was an evil will prior to it. And what could begin this evil will but pride, which is the beginning of all sin? And what is pride but a perverse desire of elevation, forsaking Him to whom the soul ought solely to cleave as to its beginning, and the making of self the one beginning?" (*De Civitate Dei*, Lib. XIV, cap. xiii).

Such is the classical and traditional Catholic doctrine of Adam's sin. It is adopted and repeated by St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 163, art. 1:

"Disorder is found in the internal motion of the soul before it is found in an external bodily act. . . . In internal motions, the appetite is first moved towards the end before it is moved to seek things on account of an end, and therefore the first human sin was connected with this first desire of an inordinate end. But man was so constituted in the state of innocence that there was no rebellion of the flesh against the spirit. Hence the first disorder of the human appetite could not consist in desiring some sensible good towards which the concupiscence of the flesh tended beyond the order of reason. Hence the first disorder must have been an inordinate desire of some spiritual good . . . above measure and this belongs to pride. Hence it is clear that the first sin of the first man was pride."¹

In conclusion, we must emphasise the fact that while both St. Augustine and St. Thomas were prepared to concede the possibility that Adam and Eve were to wait for a Divine instruction before performing the sex act,² neither of these great Doctors of the Church thought that the original sin was the performance of that act.

1 "Primo invenitur inordinatio in motu interiori animae quam in actu exteriori corporis. . . . Inter motus autem interiores prius movetur appetitus in finem quam in id quod quaeritur propter finem: et ideo ibi fuit primum peccatum hominis ubi potuit esse primus appetitus inordinati finis. Sic autem homo erat in statu innocentiae institutus, ut nulla esset rebellio carnis ad spiritus. Unde non potuit esse prima inordinatio appetitus humani ex hoc quod appetierit aliquod sensibile bonum, in quod carnis concupiscentia tendit praeter ordinem rationis. Relinquitur igitur quod prima inordinatio appetitus humani fuit ex hoc quod aliquod bonum spirituale inordinate appetiit. . . . Unde relinquitur quod primum peccatum hominis fuit in hoc quod appetit quoddam spirituale bonum supra suam mensuram, quod pertinet ad superbiam. Unde manifestum est quod primum peccatum primi hominis fuit superbia."

² See p. 19.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE EFFECTS OF THE FIRST SIN UPON ADAM AND EVE AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

Having discussed the nature of Adam's sin, it will be useful for us now to consider the effects of that sin upon himself and upon his descendants. The passage of Scripture which we have been discussing, i.e., the account of the Fall in Genesis iii, confines itself to the effects of the sin directly upon our first parents, but by implication it also deals with the results upon the human race.

The first and immediate effect recorded in Holy Scripture is the consciousness of nudity, and the consequent sense of shame, resulting in the need of a covering for the sex organs. Then the narrative records God's special punishments for those involved in the sin. The serpent is henceforth to be at war with the woman and her seed, and is eventually to have its head crushed by that seed—a promise of the ultimate victory over sin through the future Redeemer, the seed of the woman.

Then we have the punishment of Eve herself: "I will greatly multiply thy pain (or 'sorrow') and thy conception; in pain shalt thou bear children, and thy desire shall be towards thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." This implies, amongst other things, that the bringing of children into the world will be a painful process, and in addition the woman will henceforth be subject to her husband, and no longer on terms of perfect equality with him.

Finally, Adam himself is told that he will no longer find it easy to obtain his sustenance. He will have to labour and toil to get the fruits of the earth, and deal with thorns and thistles. He will have to obtain his bread by the sweat of his face, and finally die, returning to the dust from whence his body was originally taken.

The first and principal effect of the sin of Adam and Eve is implied, rather than expressly stated in this narrative. For by sinning, they lost the sense of immediate communion with God: in other words, they lost the gift of sanctifying grace in this world, and their corresponding right to the full vision of God in the next. In the words of Genesis, they "hid themselves" from God. This was, after all, the most important result of the first sin.

The narrative goes on to specify certain consequences, first in Adam and Eve, and then in the world around them. The first result

in their own nature was the consciousness of their nudity, and their need for covering the sexual organs. This obviously implies that they now experienced a rebellion of their sexual appetite against the dictates of reason, and found this appetite no longer entirely under control of their wills. In other words, the narrative plainly implies the loss of one of the special preternatural gifts originally bestowed upon them, namely, the gift of immunity from concupiscence. They were now reduced to the usual condition of nature, in which the lower appetites seek their own good irrespective of the measure of right reason.

Thus, the realisation of nudity receives a perfectly satisfactory explanation by regarding it as the result of the loss of the preternatural gift of immunity from concupiscence, without any identification of the original sin with the sex act itself.¹

The punishment of Eve specifies the liability of the female henceforth to pain and suffering, especially in childbirth, and the punishment of Adam similarly foretells labour, toil and sweat. Here we have the results of the withdrawal of another preternatural gift, namely, immunity from pain and suffering.

Adam is also informed that he is now subject to the ordinary law of death. This is the result of the withdrawal of the preternatural gift of immunity from death.

There is no indication of the withdrawal of the gift of infused knowledge. Probably that is because, in any case, Adam could pass

¹ The introduction of clothing is described in the narrative in two stages. First we read that when Adam and Eve fell, they immediately realised that they were naked, and "sewed together figleaves, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis iii, 7). Later on in the same chapter we read that "Jahveh Elohim made for Adam and his wife coats of skins and clothed them" (v. 21). Some commentators think that this very obvious anthropomorphism is intended to imply that God in some way instructed our first parents to make clothes out of the skins of the animals whom they had begun to offer in sacrifice, as this more protective clothing would be needed for the more difficult life upon which they were to enter upon their expulsion from Paradise. Crampon writes: "Dieu fit a Adam, peut-etre en ce sens qu'il apprit a nos premiers parents a se faire des vêtements de la dépouille des animaux offerts en sacrifice." Similarly Haydock: "Of skins which Adam took from the beasts which he offered in sacrifice to his merciful Judge." To this we may add that the second passage also implies according to Pere Mechineau, S.J., that "God sanctioned at the same time the sentiment of shame (pudetr) which they had experienced when, after the Fall, they were ashamed of their nakedness, and made for themselves girdles of figleaves" (*Les Trois Premiers Chapitres de la Genèse*, p. 109).

It is interesting, however, to note that St. Gregory of Nyssa refused to understand this narrative of the coats of skins literally. He says in his *Oratio Catechetica*, ch. viii, that the narrative means that God, out of his fatherly care for man, "dissolved him again into earth, that the dirt now contained in him might be separated out. This is what is meant when Moses says that God fashioned the first human beings in tunics of skin, though in my opinion he had not such skins in mind". He remarks that, as a skin separated from the animal to which it belonged is dead, so also the tunics of skin signify mortality. A similar interpretation of the text is given in his *De vita Moysis* (Migne, Vol. XLIV, 333). See the article by the Rev. E. F. Sutcliffe, S.J., *St. Gregory of Nyssa and Paradise*, in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, April 1931, pp. 337-350.

on to his descendants much of the knowledge with which God had endowed him.

The loss of the preternatural gifts was a natural consequence of the loss of sanctifying grace, for the sake of which they had originally been given. Hence this loss of the preternatural endowments may rightly be regarded as the punishment inflicted upon Adam and Eve in this life for their sin. Indeed, the narrative in Genesis clearly implies that the loss of these gifts was their punishment. In the next life their punishment would be the eternal loss of the beatific Vision, for which the gift of grace alone could prepare them. But in view of the fact that the eventual coming of a future Redeemer was expressly announced to them, we may well believe that, in view of their act of faith in this promise, they were given in advance the fruits of this Redemption, and the forgiveness of their sin. That would mean that the gift of grace was once more restored to them, and they were thus able to save their souls, and reach Heaven after their death. It is interesting in this connection to note that the names of Adam and Eve are included in several Eastern Martyrologies under date of December 19th. But they have no public cultus in the Western Church.

The punishment of the sin of our first parents obviously affected not only themselves but also their descendants. For we are all born into the world without the gift of sanctifying grace, all are subject to concupiscence, i.e., uncontrolled desire, and all die. The Church explains this fact by the doctrine of original sin, which teaches that all, in some way, share Adam's guilt, and hence all share in his punishment. That is why all are born without grace, and bereft of those preternatural gifts which accompanied the gift of grace in Adam.

Furthermore, according to many Scholastic theologians, man has, in consequence of Adam's Fall, not only been deprived of the gift of grace and the preternatural gifts, but has also been "wounded in his nature"—*vulneratus in naturalibus*. But these theologians differ when they come to discuss in what this wounding consists. St. Augustine taught that the natural powers of man were weakened in their tendency towards that which is good, and this doctrine has been widely held. The Protestant Reformers put forward an exaggerated form of this view in their doctrine of "total depravity", according to which man has even lost his freedom of will, and is quite incapable of performing even a naturally good work. Further, all his natural acts are sins in God's sight. These doctrines are favoured, to say the least, in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church. They were condemned as errors by the Council of Trent.¹

¹ Session VI, especially Canons 4, j and 7.

Possibly by way of reaction against these Protestant errors, post-Reformation Catholic theologians in an increasing number have taught that the "wounding of human nature" resulting from the Fall consists only in the withdrawal of the preternatural gifts. Some, however, think that the natural powers of man, though not intrinsically weakened, have been hindered extrinsically in consequence of the Fall, inasmuch as the external obstacles to well-doing have been multiplied, and moreover, man has forfeited the special helps which God would doubtless have given him, even in the order of pure nature, had this existed.

On this we remark that it is certainly hard to conceive that man's natural powers are now precisely in the state they would have been if man had never been raised to the supernatural state. Indeed, it seems safer to say that human sin has affected man's natural powers, and resulted in the darkening of his intellect, and the weakening of his will. We imagine that most post-Reformation theologians would agree that this is so. The only question is whether these defects are to be regarded as precisely the results of Adam's sin and of that alone. We could still agree as to the non-natural or corrupt state of man's nature at the present time, and yet regard this as due in part to the later sins of mankind.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

The doctrine of original sin, already briefly outlined in the previous chapter, is of such importance for our subject that we must devote some further attention to it. It is clear from the preceding chapters that, interpreted in the light of Catholic Tradition, the original sin of our first parents was a personal or actual sin, which involved as a punishment in this world the loss of sanctifying grace and the preternatural gifts which had accompanied it, and in the next world the loss of the Beatific Vision of God and the joy of Heaven.

That the human race shared in some way in the effects which resulted from Adam's sin was obviously realised in Old Testament times. But the doctrine of the inheritance of "original sin" by all Adam's descendants had not then been explicitly formulated, indeed, it seems to have been so formulated for the first time by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. Ecclesiastical Tradition, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, has further clarified the matter, and this has resulted in the formulation of Catholic teaching, more or less as follows:

Original sin is, in Adam's descendants, not a personal sin committed by them, but, so to speak, a sin of nature, i.e., affecting the human nature they inherit by generation. For human beings when born are without that gift of sanctifying grace which would have been theirs if Adam had not sinned. They are also without any of those preternatural gifts which Adam possessed. God intended man to possess that grace, and its absence in human beings is the result of Adam's sin. It is thus a guilty absence. But, as it is not the formal result of any personal or actual sin in Adam's descendants, it is the lowest in the rank of sins, i.e., less than the actual sins which a man may commit. Its punishment is, in this life, for us as for Adam, the forfeiting of the preternatural gifts, and in the next life, as for Adam, the forfeiting of the Beatific Vision for which grace alone can prepare us. But, whereas Adam also incurred a liability to positive punishment for his sin in Hell, we incur no such liability by original sin as such. We forfeit our right to the Beatific Vision in Heaven, but that is all.

Earlier Catholic theologians, following St. Augustine, took a much severer view, and seemed to hold that the inheritance of

original sin itself involved positive punishment in Hell, as well as the withdrawal of the bliss of Heaven. But in recent times more liberal views have prevailed. The question has an important application in the case of children who die without baptism, and therefore with the stain of original sin still upon them. All agree that such children cannot enter Heaven. But whereas St. Augustine seems to have held that they would also suffer positive punishment in Hell, later theologians hold that the loss of the Beatific Vision is a sufficient punishment, and indeed the only one to which they are liable, and accordingly, that these children may enjoy a "natural beatitude" or happiness outside Heaven, in the state called Limbo.

One result of original sin, in us as in Adam, is the loss of the preternatural gifts, and in particular, the loss of immunity from concupiscence or unbridled desire. We are all afflicted by this concupiscence, which has doubtless become even more troublesome through our actual sins. For, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, our natural inclination towards goodness and virtue is weakened through sin, and the performance of sinful acts leads naturally to a certain inclination to commit similar acts. And this involves an ever increasing difficulty in controlling desires, and a corresponding increase in concupiscence.¹

Concupiscence is thus one of the most obvious results of original sin, so far as we ourselves are concerned. The earlier theologians, indeed, seem to have regarded it as the chief element of original sin in us. This idea seems especially to have been favoured by St. Augustine, but he did not deny that original sin also involves the absence of sanctifying grace. In point of fact, he realised also that the presence of concupiscence in us is the effect of the absence of grace. But he seems to have concentrated rather on the presence of concupiscence, as constituting the essence of original sin. This was logically connected with his theory of the transmission of original sin, as we shall see.

Some later theologians, such as St. Anselm, concentrated rather on the absence of grace as constituting the essence of original sin.

St. Thomas combined the two theories. He taught that original sin in us consists, formally in the absence of sanctifying grace, but it has also a material element, namely, the presence of concupiscence.

Is concupiscence sinful, and if so, in what sense? St. Augustine certainly calls it sin, because it is a disorder resulting from guilt, and moreover it is, in his theory, voluntary in us, inasmuch as all our wills were, in some way, contained in the will of Adam. But most theologians have preferred another explanation. They have pointed out that concupiscence is, in a sense, natural to man. And

¹ Summa Theologica, Ia IIae, q. 8j, art. i and art. 3.

moreover, while it is in us as the result of Adam's sin, it is not in itself sinful, though doubtless an occasion of sin. The matter came up for definition because of the errors of the Protestant Reformers, who repeated and exaggerated St. Augustine's idea, and asserted that concupiscence is in itself sinful, and that, as it remains even in the baptised, the latter of necessity commit sins, which however are not "imputed" to them because the merits of Christ are attributed to them, by a legal fiction, in the process of justification by faith. Against this, the Council of Trent declared that baptism takes away all that has the true and proper character of sin (*totum id quod veram et propriam peccati rationem habet*). On the other hand, concupiscence remains in the baptised (*Manere autem in baptizatis concupiscentiam*). This concupiscence has sometimes been called sin, but only because it has come from sin, and inclines to sin, not because it is really and truly sinful in those who have been born again (*nunquam peccatum appellari quod vere et proprie in renatis peccatum sit, sed quia ex peccato est, et ad peccatum inclinatur*).¹

How is original sin transmitted? St. Augustine had a simple explanation: Human generation always involves concupiscence, and as concupiscence is in some real sense sinful (for it constitutes original sin in us and is our share in Adam's sin), the act of generation necessarily transmits this original sin, i.e., concupiscence, to the offspring. Later theologians, who either exclude concupiscence from the essence of original sin, or at most regard it as merely the material element as distinct from the formal one, agree that original sin is transmitted by generation. But they assert that this is because generation necessarily transmits human nature as it was after Adam's fall, i.e., without grace and the preternatural gifts, and that the presence of concupiscence in the act of generation has no essential connection with it.

In any case, original sin is present in us in so far as we are, ultimately, the children generated after the Fall by Adam, the head of the human race.

¹ Council of Trent, Session V. The Anglican Articles of Religion, on the other hand, assert, as we have already pointed out, that concupiscence has the "nature of sin" (*ratio peccati*). Yet in spite of this fact, there is "no condemnation for them that believe and are baptised" (Article IX). This certainly approximates to the Lutheran doctrine, and the conflict with the definition of the Council of Trent is painfully obvious.

CHAPTER NINE

SEXUAL ABERRATIONS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Having thus explained the Church's doctrines on the effects in us of Adam's sin, we can pass on to a study of these effects as revealed in the story of man, with special reference to sexual aberrations and corruptions. It is an exceedingly unpleasant story, but it is necessary to tell it, if only because it has been kept too much in the background, and people in consequence have failed to realise the transcendent purity of the Old Testament teaching on sex, in comparison with these pagan corruptions.

Historically, we can distinguish two special results of human sin. One is the progressive darkening of man's intellect so far as his knowledge of God is concerned. This has led to the abandonment or overclouding of the primitive monotheism or belief in one God which characterised the first human beings, as we gather from Genesis, and also characterises even to-day the most primitive human races, and precisely those which are considered by ethnologists to bear the closest resemblance to man in his original state. Instead of this primitive monotheism, we find in later humanity various forms of animism, magic, fetishism and polytheism, especially in those cultures which immediately succeeded that of the most primitive races.

Side by side with this degeneration in religious ideas, we find a corresponding corruption in sexual morality. The primitive monogamy was abandoned quite early in human history in favour of polygamy, according to the narrative in Genesis, for Lamech, a descendant of Cain, is recorded as having taken two wives (iv, 19). This is confirmed by ethnology, which reveals on the one hand that the present primitive races have retained monogamy, while the later cultures are characterised rather by some form of polygamy, or at least by some weakening in the form of matrimony. And side by side with all this there has been a still worse tendency towards sexual immorality of various kinds outside the marriage bond. In some cultures this has been reprobated, in others it is rather condoned.

Another remarkable and significant feature is that these two lines of development in human thought, religious and sexual, have had repercussions upon each other. Thus, even in the present primitive races, which on the whole have retained belief in One God and are

still monogamous, we find an idea that the Deity is in fact bi-sexual. As Otto Karrer has written:

“The primitive sees the whole as made up of biological parents and offspring; since everything possesses life, and life is sexually differentiated, and the heavenly is conceivable only in the likeness of the earthly, he is obliged to postulate as the source of this cosmic life a bi-sexual lifegiver. God is ‘father and mother in one’ is a refrain which recurs in countless myths and religious systems down to modern times. Mungan, the Supreme Being of the Australian Kurnai, is a vital principle which both begets and bears, and has in fact a son. The primordial Being of the Aranda and Loritja lives in an eternal rapture of procreation. Primitive art fashions its idols accordingly.”¹

Again, the strange sexual customs and immoralities practised even by the primitives are often given a religious aspect:

“It is, of course, a limitation of the primitive mind that it so naively transfers to the Deity man’s entire nature, and in greater or lesser degree, ascribes human sex to God. And the excesses practised in the secret rites of modern primitives must obviously be regarded as a later perversion. . . . They should be understood as attempts to restore, by a mystical ritual, what human nature has lost—the original conversation in paradise with the divine life-giver.”²

In this connection we must bear in mind that neither the religion nor the morality of the present primitive races corresponds exactly to those of the first human beings. A patient study has to be made to disentangle the really original ideas from those which must have been borrowed from later cultures. Many ethnologists have devoted themselves to this study, especially Professor Wilhelm Schmidt, who has set forth the result of his researches in his monumental work on the Origin of the Idea of God. But, as the Rev. M. Hannan, S.J., remarks, “in the pictures which Father Schmidt gives of the religious of the ‘primitives’, those elements have been left out which have been borrowed from younger cultures. Consequently, no picture of his will be the same as the description of the religion of any one tribe given by a modern explorer, because Father Schmidt, in reconstructing the religions of the parent ‘primitive’ cultures, has left out what did not belong to them, and also what is peculiar to individual

¹ Religions of Mankind, p. 128.

² Ibid.

'primitive' tribes."¹ The same applies, of course, to Fr. Schmidt's description of moral ideas of the primitives.

It must also be borne in mind that, as Pere Briault, of the Holy Ghost Fathers, observes, missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, who are the best authorities on the religious and moral ideas of these primitive races, "instead of writing for scientific reviews, have more often sent their descriptions to periodicals devoted to the edification of the faithful and the raising of funds for their works. Publications of this kind were intended for that section of the public which it was important neither to shock nor to discourage. This does not mean that these missionaries have given untruthful information to the public, but it explains why they have not always wished to reveal everything. Out of respect for their readers, male and female, they have thrown a veil over the gross nature of certain customs, and still more over the turpitude involved in slavery, pagan marriage, rapes, and divorces. And there has been hardly a suggestion that the pagan rites are often accompanied by 'religious' immorality."²

Similar considerations apply to the religion and morals of the higher cultures. Thus, much has been said about the pearls of wisdom which are to be found in the Sacred Books of the East, and these are set forth in popular works as rivals to the religious teaching of the Bible. But it has been well pointed out that these quotations "are not specimens representative of the total mass of these Eastern writings. Such sifted selections from the Bibles of other nations are liable to mislead those who inquire no further. We receive our disenchantment when we set aside the tit-bits and peruse the 'Sacred Books of the East' in their entirety. Professor Max Muller admitted that in editing that series he had been compelled to exclude portions too shameful to bear publication and escape prosecution."³

Thus, to take a prominent example, it is possible to put forward a very exalted and attractive idea of Hinduism, and its various schools of thought, some of which approximate in some respects to the most profound religious speculations of the West.⁴ But Hinduism as a popular religion is very different. To quote Otto Karrer once more:

"Only in the most primitive religions do sensual pleasure, and even sexual copulation, occupy the same prominent position as in Hinduism. The worship of the lingam* is its sacrament. Alike on the domestic altars of noble families, and in the most famous

¹ Religion and Science, in Cambridge Summer School Lectures for 1939, p. 107.

² Polytheisme et fétichisme, Paris 1929, pp. 72-73.

³ R. E. Welsh, In Relief of Doubt, 1905, p. 33.

⁴ Cf. Johanns, Vers le Christ par le Vedanta-, and Hinduism, in Studies in Comparative Religion-, also E. R. Hull, Studies in Hinduism, 1908.

⁶ This is the symbol of the male organ of generation.

temples, we find at every turn sexual sculptures and paintings which would bring a blush to the cheek of a sergeant-major. The institution of sacred dancing girls flourishes. The Hindu has no difficulty in reconciling the sanctity of a temple with prostitution. In noisy torch-lit procession, the temple prostitutes accompany their new sister to her first night, for which a wealthy man will pay some thousand rupees. Surely there must be some connection between such things and their toleration and encouragement by the official religion, and the joylessness of Indian life. Immature girls are sacrificed to masculine lust. Child-marriage, defended by the priesthood in the name of religion against all attempts at reform, enslaves the rising generation of women. . . .”^x

It is worthy of note that even Mahatma Gandhi himself, in his defence of Hinduism, admitted these defects. He wrote:

“I am well aware of all the abuses which disfigure the Hindu temples. Yet I love those temples in spite of these indescribable abuses.”²

In Hinduism, then, we have two of the worst forms of religious and moral corruption: phallic worship, and religious prostitution.

Father Hull’s *Hinduism*^{*} confirms all this. He mentions the “practice of promiscuous intercourse in the temple precincts” which in the past characterised Saktism or Tantrism, i.e., the form of Hinduism associated with the worship of the female principle. He adds that Tantrism has practically disappeared in modern times, and that “sanctified licentiousness is not (now) attached to the worship of Siva and the lingam, but to that of Vishnu, the god of divine grace and condescension, especially in connection with the worship of Krishna, who is supposed to derive sensuous pleasure from seeing the immodest caresses of his Maharajas or priestly representatives on earth. These favours are regarded by the people of that sect, even married women, as the greatest honour and privilege they can receive.” Fr. Hull adds: “To what extent this immoral view prevails is unascertainable. It certainly cannot be imputed to Hindus in general, especially educated ones, and at most it exists only among the professedly Vishnuite section.” Lastly, this writer includes “the use of obscene language on certain festival occasions” and “prostitution in temples under the cloak of ‘espousal to the gods’ ” as “blots of a more local character”, which would be “repudiated by the better kind of Hindus as outside the range of true orthodoxy”.

¹ Religions of Mankind, p. 26.

² Karrer, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³ History of Religions, C.T.S. 1910.

Here is another authority. Dr. L. D. Barnett, Assistant in the Department of Oriental Printed Books and MSS. in the British Museum, has written a little book on Hinduism (London 1906). Here he speaks of the use of the phallic symbol, and describes the school of the "Walkers in the Left Way", who "concentrate their thought upon the godhead in its sexually maternal aspect, and follow rites of senseless magic and—theoretically at least—promiscuous debauchery" (p. 26). Elsewhere he says that, "speaking generally, the Vishnuite churches represent the better side of Hinduism. Some of those devoted to the cult of Krishna have, however, an unhappy tendency to lapse into immoral practices" (P- 39);

Taking these authorities together, we think they establish the point we have been making, and show that Hinduism at least tolerates these very immoral customs, even if it does not actually inculcate them.

In view of the prevalence of this sexual immorality in primary and secondary cultures, and also in higher religions of the East, we shall not be surprised if we find a similar state of affairs in the great nations of the East in Old Testament times. And that is precisely what we do find.

Let us first consider the religious immorality of ancient Babylon. Here, while monogamy was the normal custom, as we gather from the Code of Hammurabi, the law stated that a man might have a concubine in certain circumstances and under certain conditions, as for instance if his wife could not bear children.¹ But, as Dr. A. Shadwell says in his article on Prostitution in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "some degree of prostitution appears to have been even compulsory, and imposed upon all women in honour of the goddess Mylitta" (Vol. xxii, p. 458). Certainly, sacred prostitution was widespread, and fully recognised in connection with the worship in the Babylonian temples (Condamin, *op. cit.*, p. 25).

Dollinger wrote as follows on this subject:

"Every woman in the land was the servant of Mylitta in the prostitution of herself to strangers. The Babylonian women sat within the precincts of the goddess with a garland wound like a cord round their heads; no one was to go home till a stranger had thrown a piece of money into her lap and challenged her to follow him in the name of the goddess, nor could she ever refuse him; but once consecrated by his embraces to the goddess, then, as Herodotus observes, no inducement however great could obtain her favours again. This custom was in existence centuries before

¹ Cf. Condamin, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, C.T.S., p. 24.

Herodotus: 'the women,' it is said in the Letter of Jeremias, 'sit in the way, girded with cords, and burning their magic perfumes; and if any one pass by and take one of them away for unchaste love, she glories herself to her neighbour that the other was not worthy as she that her girdle should be unloosed' ([Baruch, vi, 42, 43). And the same custom still existed in Strabo's time."¹

Mylitta may have been another form of Ishtar, the Babylonian female deity, who seems in turn to be identical with the Aphrodite of the Greeks. One of the chief centres of her worship was the Temple of Erech. This, according to Dhorme,² was "famous for the debauchery organised there, and for the number of its prostitutes. These were given the name of 'sacred' persons, and the Hebrews will adopt this term to signify 'Prostitutes' (the *qedesoth* of the Bible).. . . It even seems that the effeminate whom the Bible calls 'sacred' males (*qedesim*) also figured among the ministers of this lascivious cult."

Let us turn now from Babylon to Ancient Egypt. The religious and moral codes of this country were comparatively elevated, especially the latter, but in practice religious worship seems to have been accompanied by many undesirable features, especially due to the development of magic and of animal worship. Writing in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Dr. Shadwell, in the article on Prostitution already referred to, remarks that "the code of sexual morality laid down in the Book of Eeuiticus is prefaced by the injunction not to do after the doings of the land of Egypt, nor after the doings of the land of Canaan, where all the abominations forbidden to the Jews were practised". He adds that in Egypt, the worship of Isis, etc., "consisted of the most extravagant sensual orgies, and the temples were merely centres of vice" (p. 458). Certainly in later times the worship of the phallic emblem and obscene language were features of the festival of Osiris, and the Neo-Platonist Jamblichus, in his defence of the mysteries of the Egyptian religion, excused these corruptions: "The procession of the phallus, he maintained, had a symbolic meaning in regard to the generative nature-power awakened in spring. The disgusting talk was a symbol of the naked foul matter that had first to be fashioned and dressed. Besides, this excitement of physical instincts was good as a safety valve, a certain degree of escape being allowed a man that he might be quieter afterwards."³

From Egypt we turn to the religion of the old inhabitants of

¹ Gentile and Jew, Vol. I, pp. 447-448.

² *Oil en est l'Histoire des Religions?* I, p. 142.

³ Dollinger, *Gentile and Jew*, Vol. I, pp. 511-512. The reference to Jamblichus is i, 11.

Palestine, and the subject of Semitic Religions in general. Here religion and morality reached perhaps their lowest grade, and the greatest degree of corruption. Most popular works are very reticent on this extremely unpleasant subject, and the result is that the general public fail to realise the depth of moral degradation involved in the religious and moral ideas of the peoples surrounding the Jews in Palestine. Here are some quotations which reveal the truth, to a greater or less degree.

Mr. Stanley Cook, in his little book *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in Religions Ancient and Modern*, speaks only of the “persistence of older licentious rites”, adding that “popular religion often continues to tolerate practices which social life condemns” (p. 33). He allows that “the fertility of crops, cattle, and of man himself, was co-ordinated by an uncontrollable use of analogy in which the example was set by the ‘sacred’ men and women of the sanctuaries (kadesh, Deut. xxiii, 17).” And on another page he mentions “the prevalence of the cult of the goddess of love and war in Palestine,” adding that this is “well known from the references in the Old Testament to Ashtoreth (an intentional perversion to suggest bosheth, ‘shame’)” (p. 86). That is all. He gives little idea of the actual state of things, but leaves it to be implied.

Fr. Hugh Pope abstains from giving any details in his *Aids to the Study of the Bible*, Vol. III, and limits himself to mentioning that the Canaanites were guilty of “abominable practices”, inasmuch as “human sacrifices played a large part in their religious rites, which consisted of a depraved nature-worship” (p. 164).

Mgr. Barton is more explicit in his *Semitic Religions*, and points out that Astarte, the “oldest and greatest of all Semitic goddesses”, is the “goddess of unbridled sexual love”, adding that under this heading “we must mention, most unwillingly, the practice of sacred prostitution, both male and female, in her honour, which, with human sacrifice, constitutes the two unforgivable elements in Semitic religion” (p. 13). He continues:

“That such an institution had a religious character, and did not exist simply for sensual gratification, is proved among other things by the special words qadesh (m) and qedesha (f), implying consecration, which distinguished the addicts from the ordinary qona or public woman. In a polygamous society, where ordinary prostitution was rife, this has its significance” (ibid.).

Further details are given in Dhorme’s chapter on the Semites in the valuable work *Oil en est l’Histoire des Religions* (Paris 1911), Vol. I, and in Dollinger’s *Gentile and Jew*, pp. 451, et seq. The latter gives

details of the horrible custom of sacrificing children to Moloch (Molech, Melek, Milk), who seems to have been identical with Baal. Dollinger then describes the worship of Astarte, "the great nature-goddess standing by Baal's side. . . . The Greeks and Romans sometimes take her for Aphrodite, on account of the worship of unchastity sacred to her. . . . The human sacrifice offered to this goddess consisted in the prostitution of women: the women submitted themselves to the visitors of the feast, in the temple of the goddess or the adjoining precincts. . . . In many places women as well as maidens consecrated themselves for a length of time, or on the festivals of the goddess, with a view to propitiating her or earning her favour as hierodouloi of unchastity. This practice, so widely spread in the world of old, the delusion that no service more acceptable could be rendered a deity than that of unchastity, was deeply rooted in the Asiatic mind. . . . Thus lust itself became a service of the gods, and as the fundamental idea of sacrifice is that of the immediate or substitutive surrender of a man's self to the deity, so the woman could do the goddess no better service than by prostitution. Hence it was also the custom that a maiden before her marriage should prostitute herself once in a temple of the goddess, and this was the same in kind as the offering of the first-fruits of the field. . . . They went so far at last as to contemplate even the abominations of unnatural lust as a homage rendered to the deity, and to exalt it into a regular cultus. The worship of the goddess at Aphaca in Lebanon was specially notorious in this respect. . . . It was this same goddess of Nature who was honoured under the title of 'the Syrian goddess' at Hierapolis, the 'holy city' in Syria, where she had a most renowned and splendid temple." Dollinger goes on to describe the human sacrifices of children, and the self-mutilation of male worshippers which took place in the excitement and frenzy of the cult. "Not chastity, but barrenness was intended by mutilation. . . . The relation of foul lust which they thenceforward occupied towards women was regarded as a holy thing, and was tolerated by husbands in their wives" (pp. 452-457).

These dreadful customs are mentioned also by Hitchcock in his *Religion of Ancient Syria* (C.T.S.). He says (p. 8) that the festivals of the Baalim were "marked by gross immorality", while Ashtart is identical with the "Greek goddess of animal passion" (p. 13). He also points out, on the authority of Rawlinson, that the self-mutilation of the male worshippers was "for the purpose of sterility and male harlotry" (p. 23). Dr. Hitchcock concludes thus: "Distasteful as this subject must be, it is nevertheless necessary to consider it to-day, when there is so much revival of paganism, and a readiness to compare it with the holy religion of Christ."

What is so appalling is the fact that this gross immorality, was sanctioned and recommended as a religious act, based upon the specious reasoning, set forth in our quotation from Dollinger, that it is the highest act of religion to sacrifice to the deity that which is most dear, i.e., either one's life or one's chastity. Thus the way was opened for the fullest licence for base and even unnatural passions, and this in the name of religion itself. Could there be a more dreadful travesty of religion, a more unworthy conception of the deity, or a greater corruption in moral ideas? Here we have a terrible picture of the results of human sin, which have all come ultimately from the fall of our first parents, and the effects of that fall upon their descendants.

We have already mentioned the existence of unnatural vice. This takes its name from the Cities in the Jordan Plain. A graphic account of it is given in Genesis xix, and the constant warnings against it in the Old Testament books is a sufficient indication of its prevalence. As we shall see, it continued to be rife in Pagan Greece and Rome, and was even countenanced by philosophers and men of note. Passages in the Old Testament prophets and elsewhere seem to indicate that, as in the case of prostitution, it was given some religious significance in the paganism of the time. But we abstain from further discussion of this unnatural and horrible vice.

To complete our survey of religious and moral ideas in the country in proximity to Palestine, we must mention the religion of Persia, but at the same time we must point out that, historically, its contacts with Israel were comparatively late. Zoroastrianism may have originated in the sixth century b.c. or go back as far as 1,000 b.c. Zoroaster seems to have reformed the earlier corrupt religion of Persia and to have greatly purified it. Scrupulous personal purity, and abstinence from all sexual vice is inculcated, but the idea of physical impurity seems to be developed to excess, and very complicated rites of purification are indicated. The religious basis of the whole system is a dualistic one: there is a supreme principle of Good, and a supreme principle of Evil. As to the relations between Persian religion and Judaism, a competent authority states that "the resemblances appear, at first sight, more numerous than they really are," and are "more probably due to coincidence than to borrowing from either side" (Carnoy, *Religion of Ancient Persia*, pp. 26-27). Hence there seems to be no need to discuss the possibility of mutual influence between Persian and Jewish religion, especially in the matter of sexual ethics. In any case, the transcendence of the Jewish religion and moral teaching is too obvious to be denied.

CHAPTER TEN

THE VARIATIONS IN MORAL IDEAS

Reviewing the general character of pagan religion and morals in Old Testament times, we cannot fail to notice, on the one hand, the prevalence of polytheism, accompanied more often than not by various forms of idolatry, and on the other hand, the decay and corruption of sexual morality, extending even to condoning unnatural vice, and exalting ordinary vice into a religious act. This religious and moral degradation of the nations surrounding Israel will have an important bearing on the sexual teaching inculcated in the Old Testament, as it has equally upon its theological teaching.

Still keeping to our general view, we can apply to religion and morals in Old Testament times outside the Chosen People the terrible description which St. Paul gives in his first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, doubtless with the corruption of his own day mainly in mind. We must especially note how St. Paul explains the degeneration of morals as connected with the corruption of religious ideas, and this certainly explains the close association which we have found between polytheism, etc., and immorality. We quote St. Paul according to the Westminster Version:

“The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all impiety and wickedness of men, of such as in wickedness are repressing the truth; because what can be known about God is clear to them, for God himself hath made it clear.... They are without excuse, inasmuch as, having come to know God, they yet have not glorified Him as God, or rendered thanks, but have abandoned themselves to futile speculations, and their witless mind hath been darkened. Proclaiming themselves wise, they are become fools, and they have misrepresented the glory of the immortal God by images of mortal man, and of birds, and of beasts, and of reptiles.

“Wherefore, God hath delivered them over, through the lusts of their hearts, to uncleanness, and the dishonouring of their own bodies, because they have abandoned the truth about God for a lie, and have served and worshipped the creature in place of the Creator. . . .

“Wherefore, I say, God hath delivered them over to shameful

passions. For their women have abandoned the natural use of their bodies for the unnatural, while the men in like manner, leaving the natural use of woman, have blazed with passion one for another, men perpetrating shame upon men, and incurring thereby in their own persons the meet reward of their madness.

“And inasmuch as they have resolved against possessing the knowledge of God, God hath delivered them over to a reprobate mind, that they should do what is disgraceful, being filled with all wickedness. . . .” (Romans i, 18-29).

St. Augustine of Hippo develops the same idea and traces the dreadful story of human sin back to its beginning in the Fall of Adam:

“Man sinned, and was driven out of paradise, and moreover, he entailed upon his offspring the penalty of death and damnation, for by his own sin he had tainted it also at the very root. His wife, too, who had caused him to sin, shared his sentence; so that all who have descended from them through fleshly desire, in which the penalty of disobedience is likewise paid, have inherited original sin, whereby they are drawn on through divers errors and sorrows to that last unending torment which they will share with the fallen angels, their corrupters, masters, and partakers of their doom. . . .

“Thus, then, did matters stand. The whole mass of mankind was doomed; it lay in misery, or rather, wallowed in it, and quickly fell from bad to worse, and . . . suffered the punishment it had merited by its impious apostasy. For, whatever the wicked willingly do through blind and unbridled lust, as well as the manifest or secret punishments which they suffer unwillingly, must eventually pertain to the just anger of God....” (Enchiridion, cc. 25-27).

The widespread corruption of the moral sense involved in the condonation and even approval of vice, presents one difficulty which we must discuss. Does it not tend to show that moral ideas are essentially relative, and vary in different times and places, so that we cannot really uphold the principle that there is one moral law for all men, such as that enshrined in the Ten Commandments? The difficulty is a real one, and it will be interesting to see how it was treated by St. Thomas Aquinas.

In the first place, he distinguishes between primary and secondary precepts of the moral law. The former will normally be common to all men, for they are primary and obvious judgments. Other

precepts are best regarded as inferences or applications of these primary judgments, and these secondary precepts may be absent amongst certain people whose minds are more or less corrupted through the effects of human passion, or through custom, or in some other way (*Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, q. 94, art. 4 and art. 6). St. Thomas does not hesitate to apply this theory, not only to the fact that Germans did not regard robbery as wrong, but also to the existence of unnatural vice (*loc. cit.*).

Discussing St. Thomas's treatment as a whole, Deploigel has found in his works a threefold explanation of the variations in moral ideas. The first is the influence of the passions, and especially concupiscence, which cloud the moral judgment. The second is the unequal development of reason and the moral judgment in different races, especially those in different stages of civilisation. St. Thomas applies this principle when discussing Cicero's allegation that the human race existed originally in a more or less wild state, and that at that time a man did not even know who were his own children, and had no fixed matrimonial relationships. St. Thomas remarks that this may be true of some particular race or races, but it certainly was not universal, a conclusion amply confirmed by modern ethnologists (*Politics*, I, 1; *Ethics*, VII, 5; *Summa Theologica*, III Suppl., q. 41, art. 1, ad. 2). The third explanation is the diversity of circumstances, etc., which may rightly modify the application of a particular moral law. Thus, while murder is forbidden, it is not wrong to slay an unjust aggressor in defence of one's own life.

There is one interesting application of these principles, and that concerns the polygamy which, as we have seen, was widespread amongst ancient nations, and which still exists to-day in some parts of the world. St. Thomas discusses this matter in the *Summa Theologica*, III Suppl., q. 65, art. 1. He begins by explaining that the moral or natural law directs human actions towards their end, and fulfils in man the function performed in animals by instinct. Thus, any action which is opposed to man's end is against the law of nature. But here we can distinguish between primary and secondary ends, and also between the various ways in which a particular action may be opposed to an end. It may be opposed to it absolutely, an example being excess or defect in eating and drinking, which interfere with the health of the body, the primary end of eating, and also interfere with the good conduct of human affairs, which is the secondary end. Or again, an act may make it more difficult to reach the end, primary or secondary. If an act directly prevents the attaining of the primary end, then it is forbidden by the primary precepts of the law of nature. If, however, it only makes the attainment of this

1 Cf. Deploigel, *Conflit de la Morale et la Sociologie*, pp. 321-344.

primary end difficult, or again, if it is opposed in one way or another, not to the primary but to the secondary end, then the act is forbidden not by the primary precepts of the moral law, but by the secondary precepts which are, so to speak, inferences from the former. Now, marriage has as its primary end the procreation and upbringing of children. It has also, as its secondary end, a common sharing in the necessary tasks of life. A plurality of wives does not altogether prevent, nor always hinder the primary end of marriage, for one man may suffice for the fecundation of many women, and the education of the children born to them. But the secondary end, though perhaps not altogether destroyed, is at least greatly hampered, for peace cannot easily reign in a family where one man has several wives.

Discussing the matter again in the *Summa contra Gentes* (Lib. III, cap. 124), St. Thomas distinguishes between polygamy and polyandry. He urges that mankind naturally desires certain knowledge as to the parentage of children, and this certain knowledge may be regarded as the primary good sought from marriage. Polyandry would altogether destroy this certainty, and hence it is easy to understand why it has never been allowed by any human law or custom. Polygamy, on the other hand, found in some human societies, does not destroy this certainty of parentage, though it may lessen it. St. Thomas then goes on to set forth other arguments more directly against polygamy, such as the difficulty (as distinct from the impossibility) of one man seeing to the education of the children of several wives, and the impossibility of that sexual equality really called for by the friendship between husband and wife. This, says the Angelic Doctor, is confirmed by the fact that where a man has several wives, most of them are regarded more or less as slaves, and not as equal partners.

In article ii of the question in the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas proceeds to apply the principles laid down, in order to explain how and why polygamy was permitted to mankind in earlier times by a divine dispensation, given for special reasons.

These considerations certainly help us to understand the variations in moral ideas which have characterised different races at different times. But a complete explanation must, of course, make full allowance also for human sin, original and actual, and its effect upon the intellect and the will.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE OLD TESTAMENT REGULATIONS ON SEX

The considerations set forth in the last chapter are more or less general in their extension, and could be applied to the moral ideas and practices of all races, ancient and modern. We, however, are here specially concerned with the ideas on sex and marriage entertained by the Jews in Old Testament times. In a chapter in the First Part of this work, we have already quoted many passages indicating a very lofty conception of marriage and its duties. In the present chapter we are more concerned with some aspects which present certain difficulties to the mind. But before we discuss these in detail, there is one very useful principle of interpretation which throws much light on the whole matter. This is the principle of Divine Condescension, which is itself merely an application of the Principle of Economy so dear to the Greek Fathers, and especially to St. Athanasius. The word "economy", as Newman remarks, "occurs in St. Paul's 'Epistle to the Ephesians, where it is used for that series of Divine appointments, viewed as a whole, by which the Gospel is introduced and realised among mankind. . . . It will evidently bear a wider sense, embracing the Jewish and patriarchal dispensations, or any Divine procedure, greater or less, which consists of means to an end. Thus, it is applied by the Fathers to the history of Christ's humiliation. . . . Again, it might, with equal fitness, be used for the general system of providence by which the world's course is carried on, or, again, for the work of creation itself, as opposed to the absolute perfection of the Eternal God. . . . It seems to follow that, strictly speaking, all those so-called Economies or dispensations which display His character in action are but condescensions to the infirmity and peculiarity of our minds. . . . What, for instance, is the revelation of general moral laws, their infringement, their tedious victory, the endurance of the wicked, and the 'winking at the times of ignorance', but an *Economia* of greater truths untold, the best practical communication of them which our minds in their present state will admit?"¹

The particular application of this, which we have called the Principle of Condescension,² is applied in the Old Testament itself,

¹ *Arians of the Fourth Century*, 1901 edn., pp. 74-75.

² Adopting the terminology of P. Pinard de la Boullaye, in *L'Etude Comparee des Religions*, I, pp. 552 et seq.

especially in certain statements in the Psalms and the writings of the Prophets concerning the external religious ritual of Israel. An external ritual there must be, but it is valueless unless accompanied by the internal religious sentiments of adoration, praise, obedience and contrition. Such is the lesson inculcated over and over again, even in the Old Testament. Similarly, Jesus Christ declared expressly that polygamy had been permitted to the Jews, only because of the hardness of their hearts {Matt, xix, 8}. Again, St. Paul tells the Athenians that God “winked at” the times of ignorance {Acts, xvii, 30}, i.e., tolerated them for the time being.

We can apply this Principle of Condescension to many puzzling matters in the Old Testament. Thus, we may say, with St. Thomas Aquinas, that polygamy was permitted in the Old Testament, because it was not contrary to the primary end of marriage, but only to the secondary, and because it was desirable or even necessary that there should be a “greater multiplication of children brought up in the true worship of God”. For the sake of this end, the hindrance to the secondary end of marriage had to be tolerated for the time being {Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 65, art. 2}. The need for this increased facility in propagating children no longer holds good, and accordingly the prohibition of polygamy has regained its full force {ibid., ad. 4}.

St. Thomas’s treatment of concubinage is also interesting. He obviously takes this practice to mean a temporary union between a man and a woman, in which the sexual act is sought merely for its own sake, for the pleasure attached to it. Concubinage in this sense is practically equivalent to fornication, and is against the natural law, and of itself always a mortal sin {Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 65, art. 3 and art. 4}. Faced with the statement that many of the Old Testament worthies had concubines, St. Thomas answers thus: “Wherever we read in the Old Testament that concubines were possessed by people whom we must excuse from mortal sin, we must regard them as really wives joined to their husband in matrimony, but called concubines because they were partly wives and partly concubines. They were wives inasmuch as they were permanently united to their husband, but they were concubines inasmuch as they did not enjoy that sharing in the common tasks of life which belongs to wives” {ibid., art. 5}. This seems correct enough, for Agar is called a “concubine” in Genesis xxv, 6, but a “wife” in Genesis xvi, 3, and the same is true of other such women. Permanent concubines, therefore, were permitted in the Old Testament, and the secondary end of matrimony was dispensed with in their case.¹

¹ As St. Thomas expressly says, *ibid.*, art. j.

But temporary concubinage, which is more or less equivalent to fornication, was not permitted by the Old Testament Law.

Plurality of wives, on the other hand, was expressly allowed to the holy fathers (*sanctis patribus*) by God, and their example was followed by others, in order to increase the number of true worshippers of God (*loc cit.*, art. 2). St. Thomas does not mention any names in this article, but it is noteworthy that in the *Sed Contra*, there is a mention of Jacob, David, “and many others, who were most acceptable to God”, as having practised polygamy. David, incidentally, is said to have had seven wives and ten concubines (II Kings, iii, 2-5; xx, 3), while Solomon had no less than seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (III Kings, xi, 3). St. Thomas nowhere approves of these excesses. Nor could he do so, in view of the express statement of Deuteronomy xvii, 17, that a king should not have a multitude of wives, lest his heart be corrupted.

In view of the fact that, as we have seen, monogamy was the original form of marriage, and has obvious advantages over any other form, it seems most reasonable to say that the polygamy allowed in the Old Testament was an instance of the Principle of Condescension, whereby God allowed the Jews to imitate a particular custom of the surrounding nations, because it was opposed, not to a primary but only to a secondary precept of the natural law, and because there were sufficient reasons for allowing this concession to the Jews.

This question of polygamy in the Old Testament is discussed also by Dr. Dollinger. After remarking that “the principle of monogamy is so expressly declared in Genesis that we should have expected to find in the Mosaic Law also a prohibition against plurality of wives,” he continues as follows:

“But it is silent on the subject, and so polygamy was tolerated, and propounded as permitted by the Law. The example of the patriarchs may have contributed to this; yet Isaac had but one wife, and Abraham only took Hagar as his concubine at the wish of Sarah; and Jacob became the husband of two sisters merely because of the deceit of Laban. It was the ‘hardness of heart’ and ill-restrained sensuality of the people, manifested in their passion for the licentious idolatry of the Syrians, that determined the Lawgiver to permit polygamy or the keeping of concubines as the lesser evil. . . . Had monogamy been strictly enjoined, the yoke of the law would have been still oftener set aside.”¹

He adds that “it was chiefly the example of the kings, who had

¹ Gentile and Jew, Vol. II, p. 359.

complete harems, full of wives and concubines, which reacted so injuriously on the people, and yet the law of kings expressly forbade them a plurality of wives.”¹ Similarly, “the Mosaic Law retained divorce, which had come to be customary, on account of the people’s hardness of heart.”²

We can now consider one of the most interesting of Jewish rites, that of circumcision. The Book of Genesis says that circumcision was to be a sign of the covenant which God made with Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race (Genesis xvii, u). It was thus certainly anterior to the time of Moses. Herodotus says that the Egyptians and other nations practised it from the earliest times. It is even found among tribes of America, Australia and Oceania, and it is hardly conceivable that these could all have borrowed it from the Egyptians or the Semites. Its origin, if it has a common one, is lost in the mists of antiquity. In most cases it seems to have some religious significance, and thus it is often found in the initiation rites of adolescent young men in primitive tribes.³ Mgr. Leroy, in his article on the subject in the *Dictionnaire Apologetique de la Foi Catholique*, says that in primitive tribes the rite of circumcision on the one hand authorises the initiate to marry, and on the other hand it also removes, as it were, a stain which is thought to be attached to the organs of generation (Vol. I, col. 537-8). Lagrange remarks that the place where circumcision is performed indicates sufficiently that it is, as it were, a consecration and a hallowing of the sexual life, to which the young man is now admitted by a bloody sacrifice. It is, at the same time, the final form of a very sane taboo, which preserves a young man from premature sexual excess. (*Etudes sur les religions semitiques*, p. 243). Similarly, Ermoni, writing in the *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, describes the rite of circumcision as “a rite of initiation, analogous, in a certain sense, to our baptism. It is a pact of blood. . . . The shedding of blood, and the choice of the member to be mutilated, had a special symbolism. To cause the blood to flow, and to injure the human body, especially in a member regarded at one and the same time as shameful and sacred, seems to have had the same fundamental idea as sacrifices, namely, the establishing or conserving of a common life between the deity and the tribe” (Vol. 2, col. 2,520).

The religious significance of the rite of circumcision does not exclude explanations of a different character. Thus, it has been urged that the rite has a distinctly hygienic character, and from this

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid. p. 360.

³ There is also in some places a corresponding rite of defloration. On the significance of this see Part One, p. 50, n. 1.

standpoint it is still allowed by the Catholic Church, though strictly forbidden as a religious rite. It is interesting to note that St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica* (Ia IIae, q. 102, art. 5, ad. 1), gives three reasons for the institution of circumcision in the case of Abraham. The first is that it symbolised a profession of faith in the One God. The second reason is that it lessens the heat of concupiscence in the male member—a hygienic reason, certainly.¹ The third reason is that circumcision constitutes a mockery of the indecent rites of Venus and Priapus, in which that part of the body was specially honoured. In other words, it was instituted as a corrective to phallic worship.

Here, then, we have an instance of a rite widely used in pagan religions, but given also by God to the Jewish race, with a definite meaning. For circumcision meant that one was indeed a child of Abraham, and an heir to the promises. Moreover, according to most theologians, circumcision was the Jewish equivalent of baptism, and a sacramental rite which formed the remedy for original sin at that time.

It was doubtless because of its religious significance that Christ our Lord willed to be circumcised, like any other child of Abraham. And it is particularly interesting to note that the Church has devoted a special Feast to the commemoration of this event. Evidently she has set aside any motives of prudery which might militate against such a celebration.

Another instance of the Principle of Condescension, and an illuminating one, is to be found in the distinction between pure and impure animals. This distinction goes back to the time of the Flood,² and it is found, in some form or other, in most if not all ancient religions and peoples. In primitive races we similarly find animals chosen as tribal totems, and these are sacred and may not be eaten. Sacred animals were also a prominent feature of the religion of Ancient Egypt, and they were actually worshipped, and horrible immoralities practised with them in their honour.³

Though there is a distinction between the two pairs of ideas, sacred and profane, and pure and impure, yet, as Lagrange says, while the unclean cannot become sacred, a sacred animal can become an unclean one, “and even ought to become so in another and exclusive religion, since all that is sacred in one cult is necessarily an abomination to those who condemn it.”⁴

¹ St. Thomas invokes this particular reason again in *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 70, art. 2 ad. 1, and in III, q. 70, art. 3 ad. 1.

² Cf. Genesis vii, 2 et seq.

³ Cf. Dollinger, *Gentile and Jew*, I, pp. 482-488.

* Quoted by Barton, *Semitic Religions*, p. 14.

The distinction between sacred and profane animals, and also between animals which are clean or unclean respectively, is found in the various forms of Semitic Religions.¹

The division of animals into "clean" and "unclean" also has a hygienic aspect. For "clean" animals could be eaten, but "unclean" ones could not. It has been pointed out² that the animals condemned in the Old Testament as "unclean" and not to be eaten were, in fact, animals which were unsuitable as human food, because of their scavenging habits, etc., and their liability to communicate disease.

It is also interesting to note the religious aspect of the classification. For, as St. Thomas pointed out long ago, "the surrounding nations, and especially the Egyptians, amongst whom the Israelites were brought up, were accustomed to offer in sacrifice to their idols animals such as those condemned as 'unclean' by Moses; or again, they used them for evil practices. Animals such as those allowed to the Jews were not eaten by these other nations, but the latter worshipped them as gods', or else abstained from them for some other reason" (*Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, q. 102, art. 6, ad. 1). A similar motive seems to have been present in the choice of those animals which the Jews were allowed or even commanded to offer in sacrifice. The Egyptians were accustomed to offer other kinds of animals in sacrifice to their own gods, and on the other hand, they worshipped precisely those animals which the Jews were ordered to offer up in sacrifice.³ Thus, the notion of clean and unclean animals had a relative sense, and presents us with an instance in which the Jews were provided with a classification which at once resembled those of pagan nations, and yet differed from them.

In any case, we must always bear in mind that the same Old Testament books which set forth the distinction between pure and impure animals make it plain that the same God created all kinds of animals in the beginning, and that "He saw that they were good".

The example of pure and impure animals will help us to understand and appreciate at their proper value some injunctions concerning personal purity which at first sight are rather puzzling. Thus, in Leviticus xv, 16-18, legal or physical impurity is incurred not only by a man suffering from nocturnal pollution, but also by a man who performs the normal sexual act with his wife, and the latter is unclean also. Husband and wife are both to wash themselves with water and remain unclean until the evening. While thus unclean, they cannot take an active part in religious rites.

¹ Barton, *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

² E.g. by Dr. P. Wood, in *Moses the Founder of Preventive Medicine*, p. 76.

³ *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, q. 102, art. 3, ad. 2.

It must be carefully noted here that the legal impurity here envisaged is one of the slightest character. It lasts only for a few hours, and the ceremonial lustration laid down is one which ordinary hygiene would indicate, for in sexual intercourse it is quite usual for some of the semen to remain both on the male member and also on the external parts of the female organ.

It will be of interest here to give two extracts from commentaries on this passage in Leviticus xv. Cornelius a Lapide quotes Theodoret as saying: "Sancit hos Deus modestiae et continentiae causa, ut assiduitatem congreendi etiam in conjugibus cohiberet, sui purificandi molestia et pigritia."

Similarly a more modern writer, Hummelauer, quotes the great Douay theologian, Sylvius: "Notat Sylvius hanc legem sanxisse Deum, ut etiam in conjugibus cohiberet nimiam frequentiam congressus ex taedio et molestio lotionis propter earn faciendae."

In other words, the prescription in question had an essentially practical purpose, and was not intended to teach that the sex act itself is impure. It is worthy of note that, though as we shall see the sex act may be accompanied accidentally by sin, the Mosaic Law does not direct that a sacrifice for sin should be offered after sexual intercourse, though such a sacrifice is ordered after childbirth. This in itself is a remarkable fact.

In this connection we must also quote some passages inculcating abstinence from sexual connections for periods of three days. The first is in Exodus xix, 15, where the Israelites are commanded by Moses to abstain from connections with their wives, as part of their preparation for the promulgation of the Law. This preparation has to last the greater part of three days. Next, we have the incident mentioned in 7 Kings, xxi, 5-6. Here David asks Achimelech the priest for the holy bread. The priest asks: "if the young men be clean, especially from women?" David thereupon answers: "Truly, as to what concerneth women, we have refrained ourselves from yesterday and the day before, when we came out." Thirdly, we have the recommendation given to the young Tobias by the angel Raphael, to abstain for three days and three nights from consuming his marriage with his wife, in order to receive a blessing from God.¹

Light is thrown on these passages of Holy Scripture by the fact that similar ideas were set forth by other nations of antiquity. Thus the Hindus and the Babylonians both enjoyed a ritual bath after sexual intercourse. Egyptian priests were enjoined to abstain from such intercourse when about to perform their special duties, and the laity had to undergo ablutions before they entered the sacred

¹ Tobias, vi-viii. These passages are quoted and discussed in a chapter in Part Three.

precincts. Thus, side by side with the most horrible immorality there was a current of thought which recognised that abstention from sexual intercourse was at least desirable in those who wished to approach very closely to the Deity. Possibly that was motivated by the dreadful sexual excesses found in these pagan religions. In the case of the Jewish religion, this sternly forbade all immoral practices, and especially those which were performed by the surrounding nations in the name of religion. But their idea of ritual purity and abstinence was adopted and sanctioned, doubtless to reinforce the need to control the sexual appetite, so liable to excessive exercise, and thus make it possible to practise religious rites with greater devotion and freedom from distractions.

As we shall see in a later chapter, St. Paul similarly recommends temporary abstinence from sexual relations, for the sake of prayer (I Corinthians, vii, 5), and the Church herself adopted and recommended the practice of three days' abstention immediately after marriage.¹

One thing is clear, and that is that these Old Testament regulations were in no way intended to suggest that the marriage relationship is essentially impure or sinful, at least in itself. But it is a matter of human experience that it is extremely difficult for the will to control the sexual appetite, even in marriage, and occasional abstinence may strengthen this control of the will. Moreover, there is often a temptation, not perhaps to perform the act in a wrong way, but for a wrong intention, i.e., simple and solely for the sake of the pleasure attached. It then becomes sinful, as we shall explain in a later chapter. It may well be that facts like these lie behind the legal or physical impurity which the Old Testament attached even to the legitimate performance of the sexual act by married people. Such legal impurity need not imply moral impurity, any more than moral uncleanness attached to those animals called "unclean" in the Old Testament.

We now come to another class of legal impurities, those connected with the menstrual period in women (Leviticus, xv, 19-31), and with childbirth (Leviticus xii, 1-8). Here it seems clear that the uncleanness in question is regarded simply as resulting from the physiological discharge connected with these periods in a woman's life. The only difficulty might lie in the fact that, in the case of an extended discharge and in that of childbirth, sacrifices are ordered, and these are expressly said to be "for sin" (Leviticus xii, 6, xv, 30). It is not impossible that the Jews of that time regarded an extended discharge in a woman as, in some sense, a result of sin, and that would account for the sacrifice ordered in such a case. As to child-

¹ This is discussed on p. 153, and also in Part Three.

birth, there is no need to suppose that this was regarded as sinful in itself. But, as Jewish commentators have remarked, the offering of the sacrifice ordered provided an opportunity of atoning for any sins of impatience of which she might have been guilty during her labour. Moreover, as we have said, there may have been some accidental sin attached to the act of conception because of the vehemence of desire, or the absence of a right intention. If child-birth were sinful in itself, it would certainly be difficult if not impossible to explain why it was always an occasion of rejoicing, and indeed a festival (cf. Genesis xxi, 6, etc.).

In any case, it is important to remember that among other nations, the ills affecting women on these occasions were the subject of far more objectionable measures, as they still are in some parts of the world to-day. By comparison, the provisions of the Mosaic legislation were indeed mild and merciful.¹

In the Jewish Law, there was a difference in the period of purification after childbirth, according to the sex of the child. For a female child, it was twice as long as for a male. This is doubtless to be explained by the idea prevalent at that time that the physiological discharge lasts longer in the case of the female child.²

The rite of purification after childbirth is of especial interest to us, inasmuch as Our Blessed Lady is recorded as having fulfilled it after the birth of Our Lord, and also because it has a Christian counterpart in the ceremony of the Churching of Women. These matters are discussed in a later chapter.

We must now turn to some Old Testament texts which seem to imply that the organs of generation are essentially and in themselves shameful and indecent. They are very important because, in conjunction with some similar texts in the New Testament, which will be considered in due course, they have probably provided the Scriptural basis for the widespread theological description of the human sex organs as "inhonesta".³ These texts must accordingly be considered very carefully. First, then, we have the incident related at the end of Genesis ix. Here we read that the patriarch Noe became drunk, "and was uncovered in his tent". One son saw his father's nakedness, and apparently made sport of it. But the other sons of Noe covered their father, going backwards into the tent for the

¹ Thus, during menstruation it was the custom of the Parsees to separate a woman completely from her family and to forbid her to speak to anyone. The Zabii purified with fire every place she trod. The negroes in Issing, the Calmucks and many others used to have special houses for such women, and in the neighbourhood of the River Plate they were sewn into hammocks till they were well again. See Commentary on Leviticus by Rev. C. D. Ginsburg.

² This is asserted definitely by Hippocrates.

³ See Part One, p. 3.

purpose. Chanaan, the son who had thus dishonoured Noe, was cursed, but the two other sons were blessed.

It seems clear enough from the narrative that the offence here was the deliberate and apparently prurient action of Chanaan. The word translated "nakedness" in our English Bible is rendered by "verenda" in the Vulgate. This Latin word comes from a root which gives us our word "reverence", and thus does not imply any indecency as such in the sex organs, but rather the contrary. They are organs which should be covered—precisely out of reverence. The LXX Greek version here has "gumnosis", which signifies "nakedness", without any unpleasant signification. Our words "gymnasium" and "gymnast" come from this Greek word. The Hebrew word is *erwath*, which again signifies precisely "nakedness", and does not necessarily imply indecency, at least in the sex organs themselves. If there is any indecency implied, it is not in the organs, but in their undue manifestation. Hence, on careful examination, this particular text does not in any way support the view that the sex organs are themselves indecent.

Next we have a series of regulations in Leviticus xviii, which forbid a man to "uncover the nakedness" of various females. The Vulgate here has *turpitudō* where the Douay has "nakedness", and certainly this term *turpitudō* seems at first sight to imply that the sex organs are in themselves indecent and dishonourable. The Hebrew word here is the same as that in the passage in Genesis just considered, and it means precisely "nakedness", neither more nor less. But whereas the LXX had rendered this Hebrew word by *gumnosis* in Genesis, here in Leviticus it is rendered by another word, *aschemosune*, which is of particular interest to us inasmuch as it recurs in I Corinthians xii 23, where it is rendered in the Vulgate as *inhonestā*. The fact that the Vulgate here has *turpitudō* led the Rheims translators to put "turpitude", subsequently changed by Challoner into "nakedness". But the Rheims translators were careful to put a marginal note explaining that the act of sexual union, here described as "uncovering the turpitude" of a female, "is then turpitude when the act is unlawful, but honest in lawful marriage". That the reference is to the sexual act seems clear. Accordingly, Cornelius a Lapide writes: "Revelare turpitudinem alicujus est illam cognoscere, et cum ea rem habere, sive in matrimonio sive extra illud" (on Leviticus xviii, 7), and Hummelauer in more recent times has written that "turpitudinis discooperire euphemismus est pro sexu commistione, et hoc loco intelligitur de commistione potissimum per matrimonium attentatum". (on Leviticus xviii, 7).

Now it is important to note that this chapter of Leviticus is almost wholly concerned with marriages or sexual relationships within the

prohibited degrees of kindred, i.e., with sex acts which are indeed cases of turpitude. There is indeed one verse which refers to the relations between a man and his wife, but this forbids the “uncovering of her nakedness” during her menstrual period, i.e., when the sex act is, to say the least, highly undesirable, if not actually indecent.

In other words, the “turpitude” is not in the sex organs themselves, but in their uncovering under the circumstances in question. As Cornelius a Lapide writes: “Turpitudō vocantur membra inhonesta, quae hebraice vocantur nuditas per antiphrasin, eo quod minime deceat ilia esse nuda” (In Eevit. xviii, 6).

There is at least no direct statement implying either that the sex organs themselves are indecent or impure, or that their rightful exercise constitutes a moral “turpitude”. At most it involves a slight ritual or legal impurity, as we have seen.

Our treatment of this aspect of the subject would be incomplete if we did not mention the emphasis on modesty in clothing implied in such texts in the Pentateuch as Genesis iii, 21, ix, 22, viii, 21; Exodus xx, 26, xxviii, 42, etc. We suggest that these texts do not necessarily signify any impurity in the sex organs as such, though, in view of human weakness, they may well aim at avoiding an unnecessary exposure of them. There is nothing surprising in this, in view of the moral corruption of the sex ideas of the nations surrounding Israel at that time.

It may be quite true that the general tendency of these Old Testament texts is to discourage too free a use of the sex function by married people. It may even be true that indirectly a certain legal uncleanness is attached to the performance of the sex act, though not, in our opinion, to the sex organs themselves. But this is, in our view, adequately explained, first by the effects of original sin and actual sin upon man’s control of his sexual appetites, and secondly, by the need to react as strongly as possible against the awful sexual perversion and licence prevalent amongst the surrounding nations. There is absolutely no need to exaggerate the significance of these prescriptions, or to see in them an implication that the sex function, exercised in accordance with God’s law, or the sex organs themselves are impure or indecent.

Before we leave the Old Testament, we must consider two important texts which seem at first sight definitely to imply that the act of conception, if not that of childbirth, is sinful. The first is the statement in 'Psalm 56, usually translated thus:

“Behold, I was conceived in iniquities,
And in sin did my mother conceive me.”

The Hebrew here has “born” for “conceived” in the first part of the verse, so that we can translate thus, with the Westminster Version:

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity.
And in sin did my mother conceive me.”

Two different words are used in Hebrew, and are here translated accordingly as “iniquity” and “sin” respectively. But there does not seem to be any important difference in their meaning. The new Latin Psalter, published in Rome has:

“Ecce in culpa natus sum, et in peccato concepit me mater mea.”

As to the significance of the verse, some ancient Jewish commentators inferred from it that David was in fact the child of an adulterous union.¹ We can only remark that there is absolutely no evidence that this was in fact the case. Catholic commentators usually interpret the text as referring to the stain of original sin, which affects the souls of all human beings who are descended from Adam. This interpretation is doubtless ultimately true. But, as the *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique* remarks (article. *Veche originel*, Vol. XII, col. 288), “in the state of Revelation at the time of the psalmist, the idea of the extension of original guilt as such to the whole human race was as yet unknown.” Accordingly, with Lagrange², bearing in mind the religious ideas of the Jews at that time, we might give as an equivalent translation the following:

“I come from sinful men, and from sinners, only sinners can be born.”

In other words, the psalmist confesses that he belongs to a generation of sinners. Hence, there is absolutely no need to interpret the verse as implying any guilt in the union of David’s parents, and certainly not in the act of generation itself, or in the subsequent birth of the child. But if it is insisted that some kind of sin is in fact implied, we could still understand this of some accidental sin of the kind already explained, i.e., a lack of right intention, excess of passion, or absence of patience and resignation in the pains of childbirth.

The second text is that found in Job xiv, 4. This runs as follows in the Douay Version:

¹ Cf. Stanley, *Jewish Church*, ch. ii, p. 46, n.

² *Pitire aux Romains*, p. 114.

“Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed?
Is it not Thou, who only art?”

The Hebrew can be rendered literally thus:

“Who will give clean from unclean? Not one.”

This text is most reasonably interpreted in the same way as the passage in Psalm 50 just discussed. Thus, it seems to mean that “No man is pure in God’s sight, for he comes from a race of sinners.” The verse is thus brought into line with other similar statements in the same Book of Job:

“Shall man be justified in comparison with God,
Or shall a man be more pure than his Maker?” (iv, 17).

“Behold, among his saints none is unchangeable,
And the heavens are not pure in his sight.
How much more is man abominable, and unprofitable.
Who drinketh iniquity like water?” (xv, 15-17).

“Can man be justified compared with God,
Or he that is born of a woman appear clean?
Behold, even the moon does not shine.
And the stars are not pure in his sight.
How much less man that is rottenness.
And the son of man who is a worm.” (xxv, 4-5).

These other statements are indeed made by Job’s opponents, Eliphaz and Baldad, while the original statement in xiv, 4 was made by Job himself. Even so, this would merely signify an agreement between Job and his critics in this particular sentiment.

We must mention, however, that Dr. Kissane, in his recent work on the Book of Job, suggests an emendation of the text, on the ground that in its present form it does not fit in with the context, which deals, not with the sinfulness of man, but with the inevitability of death: “Here he (Job) expresses a wish that it were the fate of the wicked only, and that the just should not perish with them.” Accordingly, Dr. Kissane suggests the following translation:

“Oh! that the clean perished not like the unclean!”¹

We conclude that, when carefully examined, neither the passage

¹ Book of Job, pp. 72, 81.

from the Psalms nor that from the Book of Job really asserts that the process of conception or generation is a sinful one in itself, though it may be accidentally accompanied by sin of some kind. We thus arrive at the same conclusion as before. No passage in the Old Testament implies in-reality that the sexual act is in itself impure or sinful. At most, the passages invoked imply some physical or legal impurity in conception or childbirth, and this notion may have been set forth because of the sin which does sometimes accompany conception, etc. Further, they may have been motivated by a desire to help to curb the unruly character of the sex instinct.

Viewing the Old Testament teaching on sex as a whole, it certainly seems to allow for the possibility of sin in connection with the sex act. But how could it be otherwise, in view of the effects of the Fall upon the sexual appetite? The Old Testament also emphasises certain ritual impurities in sex matters, doubtless with the practical purpose of restraining the instinct within due bounds, and discouraging any imitation of the terrible excesses so common in the surrounding nations. Certainly, we must never forget the remarkable contrast between the sex life of the Jews and that of the surrounding peoples. The Jews managed to keep themselves free from the horrible and immoral practices described in a previous chapter, and thus Israel was indeed a "light shining in a dark place", upholding the standard of sexual purity in a world which had forgotten its existence.

In any case, there is nothing anywhere in the Old Testament which proves that the sex act itself is necessarily to be regarded with aversion, or as morally wrong. It is surely in the highest degree significant that the Books of the Law, which contain the ritual prescriptions with which we have been dealing, and which seem to imply some impurity in sex, begin with a chapter emphasising that, like the rest of the animal creation, human nature was created by God in the beginning in the two sexes, male and female, with a view to their union, and that this creation was "very good", and received from the Creator the divine precept, "increase and multiply, and fill the earth".

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION

I. THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF OUR LADY

Having dealt with the question of sex in the Old Testament, we are now in a position to pass on to the consideration of the teaching on the same matter set forth in the New Testament by Our Lord and His Apostles. But as the question of sex enters into some matters connected with the Incarnation itself, it seems desirable to treat these first.

We begin with the Immaculate Conception of Our Blessed Lady.

When defining this doctrine, the Church made it clear that it signifies that Mary's soul was, from the first moment of its existence, free from original sin. As original sin consists formally in the absence of sanctifying grace, her freedom from original sin must consist formally in her possession of sanctifying grace. But we must not limit it to that. Original sin has also, according to the view we have followed, a material element, namely concupiscence. Hence, as Our Lady was free from original sin, she must also have been free from this particular imperfection.¹ This freedom from concupiscence manifested itself especially in her voluntary choice of a state of virginity, eventually expressed and confirmed in a vow, as we shall explain in another chapter.² But we must not think that freedom from concupiscence essentially or necessarily involves virginity. Our first parents were free from concupiscence, and yet were not meant by God to remain in the virginal state: quite the contrary.³

What we have said so far concerns Mary herself and what theologians call her "passive conception", i.e., Mary as conceived, as distinct from her "active conception" by her parents SS. Joachim and Anne. How was Mary conceived by her parents? A few medieval writers, who adopted St. Augustine's view that original sin is necessarily incurred by all who come into being through sexual generation, precisely because of the concupiscence which characterises it, and who nevertheless wished to defend Our Lady's

¹ On this, see Canon Smith, *Mary's Part in our Redemption*, p. 51; Cambridge Summer School Lectures on Our Lady, pp. 77, 163 et seq.; Pohl-Preuss, *Mariology*, pp. 72 et seq.

² Cambridge Summer School Lectures on Our Lady, pp. 77, 84. See ch. xv.

³ See Ch. Three.

freedom from original sin, suggested that St. Anne's conception of Mary was a truly virginal one, in which St. Joachim had no part, and that in this way Mary, not being generated by a sexual act, was free from original sin.¹ However, as an eminent theologian has said, "the Church never approved such a notion, and it received little support."² Accordingly, we prefer to hold that Our Lady came into existence as the result of a normal act of sexual generation by her parents, even though this may have been characterised and accompanied by the concupiscence which, according to St. Augustine, is always found in sexual generation.³ In any case, if Our Lady had a human father, and was thus directly descended from Adam, she, as a child of Adam, incurred the debt of original sin,⁴ and was exempted from the actual stain of original sin only by a special privilege, granted her in virtue of the merits of her Divine Son.⁵

If we ask why Our Lady was thus exempted from the general law of original sin, we can give three reasons:

(1) It was in order that she should be fit to give human nature to the Son of God, so far as a creature can be fitted by grace for this supreme privilege.

(2) It was also in order that she should, in her person, constitute an example of perfect and complete redemption from sin and its effects, through the merits of her Divine Son.

(3) Lastly, it was in order that, through her Divine Motherhood, and the sanctity which accompanied it, she might be a worthy Mother of all Christians.

To these reasons, customary in books of Marian Theology, I would add a fourth: Our Lady was exempted from original sin in order to give us some idea of feminine human nature as it was in the state of innocence. This gives us new light on the meaning of the phrase "the Second Eve" as applied to Mary. I return to this aspect of the doctrine later.

¹ See Dr. Flynn, in Cambridge Summer School Lectures on Our Lady, pp. 95-96.

² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³ Pohl-Preuss, *Mariology*, p. 39.

⁴ On the question whether she incurred the *debitum remotum*, or the *debitum proximum*, or both, see Pohl-Preuss, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁵ See Rickaby-Harper, *Immaculate Conception*, pp. 31-34; Flynn, *op. cit.*, p. 96; Pohl-Preuss, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION

II. THE VIRGINAL CONCEPTION OF OUR LORD

The next subject which calls for discussion is the Virginal Conception of Our Blessed Lord by his Mother Mary. This is often called the “Virgin Birth”, especially by non-Catholics, but it is of importance here to observe an accurate terminology. The “Virgin Birth” is concerned with Mary’s Virginity in partu, and it will be considered in the next chapter. Here we deal with the virginal Conception. This is the doctrine set forth thus in the Apostles’ Creed: “He was conceived by the Holy Ghost”, and it means that the human nature of Jesus Christ was formed in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the direct action of the Holy-Spirit, without any intervention by a human father.

As there exists a certain amount of misunderstanding on the matter, we must point out that it was not absolutely necessary for Our Lord’s Divinity that He should have no human father. It would have been possible for His human nature to have been generated in the normal human way by Joseph and Mary. For the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ means that the human nature of Jesus—complete and entire as a human nature—was assumed and united to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, from the first moment of its existence. The doctrine does not as such require any special mode whereby this human nature was brought into existence. This is important, because there is widespread misunderstanding on the subject, not only among Protestants, but also, strange to say, among Catholics, and mirabile dictu, even among priests.^{1 2} In view of this, it seems desirable to give some authorities for the doctrine I have enunciated:

(1) “Neither the Evangelists, nor the Church, ever deduce Christ’s Divinity from the Virgin Birth, but, being Himself different, it was fitting that He should be born differently.”—Fr. C. C. Martindale, *Jesus of Nazareth*, C.T.S., p. 5.

(2) “It cannot too emphatically be recalled that Jesus is not Son of God because He is virgin-born; nor does pre-existence

^{1 1} myself was, not many years back, accused by a priest of publicly teaching heresy, because I expounded the doctrine just set forth, in the Enquiry Bureau of the Universe.

necessitate virgin birth” (C. C. Martindale, *Virgin Birth*, p. 9, n.).

(3) “There seems to be no intrinsic and necessary connection between the virgin birth of Christ and the mystery of the Incarnation. God might have assumed, as many think, a human nature, and that human nature might have had a normal human origin from a human father as well as from a human mother. The Incarnation stands by itself, perfect and complete, whether Christ’s Mother be a virgin or not” (J. P. Arendzen, *Whom do you Say?* p. 220).

(4) “Although the Son of God could have assumed human flesh from any matter whatsoever, it was most suitable that He should take flesh from a woman” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 31, art. 4).

(5) “Many seem to imagine that the Incarnation would have been impossible had the Son of God made Man not been born of a Virgin. Now, the Incarnation means the assumption of the elements of human personality into a higher Personality. . . . But that assumption is independent of the origins of those elements, so that the Incarnation as such would depend neither on virginal conception nor birth” (Fr. Hugh Pope, O.P., in *Cambridge Summer School Lectures on Our Lady*, p. 130).

But, though not necessary for the Incarnation, the Virginal Conception was in every way fitting. St. Thomas Aquinas gives the following reasons for it, in his *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 28, art. 1:

“First, it was fitting, in order to keep the dignity of the Father who sent the Son. For, as Christ is the true and natural Son of God, it was not fitting that He should have had any father other than God, lest the dignity of God the Father should be transferred to another.

“Secondly, it was an appropriate property of the Son who was sent, for He is the Word of God. Now, a word is conceived without any corruption of the heart.... Accordingly, as the Word of God assumed flesh, so that this was the flesh of the Word of God, it was fitting that this flesh should be conceived without corruption in his mother.¹

“Thirdly, it was appropriate for the dignity of Christ’s humanity, in which there could be no place for sin. But it would not have been possible for his flesh to have been born in a nature already corrupted by matrimonial intercourse, without thereby becoming infected by original sin. Hence Augustine says:

¹ The reference here is, of course, to the physical “corruption” entailed in conception, in St. Thomas’s view, by the perforation of the hymen.

‘Nuptial congress was not present there, namely, in the marriage of Mary and Joseph, because in sinful flesh this could not take place without that shameful concupiscence of the flesh which comes from sin; but He who was to be without sin willed to be conceived without this.’¹

“Fourthly, it was fitting on account of the object of Christ’s Incarnation, for this was that men should be reborn as sons of God, ‘not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’. An example of this should appear in the conception itself of Christ. Hence Augustine says: ‘It behoved our Head to be born of a virgin, by a great miracle, whereby it might be signified that his members were to be born of the virginal Church according to the Spirit.’ ”

Having established with St. Thomas the essential fitness of the Virginal Conception, we must pass on to consider reverently its character and significance. The Virginal Conception of Our Lord implies in the first place two important facts: first, that it took place without the normal male activity in generation, and secondly, that it took place without detriment to the physical virginity of Our Lady. Our Lord was truly conceived by a Virgin.

The second characteristic, i.e., that the Virginal Conception did not affect the physical virginity of Our Lady, follows, of course, from the first characteristic, i.e., the absence of matrimonial intercourse. It is, however, to be noted that the loss of physical virginity does not always accompany normal conception, for cases of conception as a result of intercourse without any rupture of the virginal hymen are by no means unknown, as reference to modern works on the subject will show.² Again, it is interesting to recall once again the idea entertained by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas that, in the state of innocence, conception, though the result of matrimonial intercourse, would nevertheless have taken place without any injury to physical virginity.³ A similar idea was accepted by St. Albert the Great, and it is significant that he discusses one important objection against it. This objection is that such a virginal conception, i.e., one which did not entail the loss of physical virginity, would derogate from the singular character of the Virginal Conception of Jesus by Mary. St. Albert gives this answer to the objection: „

¹ We note here how St. Thomas accepts and applies St. Augustine’s conception of the accidentally sinful character of matrimonial intercourse. We discuss this idea elsewhere, Cf. pp. 76, 79, 82.

² A lady doctor informs me that she has herself known of cases of conception without rupture of the hymen, and adds: “It is possible for intercourse to take place where there is a very wide and lax hymen without this being broken. It is also possible, though it must be extremely rare, for conception to take place without penetration.”

³ See pp. 26-28.

“The singular privilege of the Blessed Virgin consists in the fact that, remaining altogether pure in mind and body, she conceived, not from the seed of another, but of the Holy Ghost. Eve, on the other hand, conceived from the seed of a man.”¹

In other words, Albert the Great seems content to allow that there could have been some similarity between Eve and Mary in their conceptions in so far as in both cases the physical integrity of the hymen remained intact. The “singular privilege” of Mary consisted, not in the integrity of the hymen in her conception, but in her conception without human seed.

This particular feature of the Virginal Conception calls for more careful consideration. Albert the Great, as we have seen, regards the conception without human seed as a “singular privilege”. And he is here merely voicing the constant teaching of Catholic Tradition. For that Tradition has ever held that, in the words of Pope Leo the Great, “*Fecunditatem Virgini Spiritus Sanctus dedit*”—“The Holy Ghost gave fruitfulness to the Virgin.” That is the statement found in this great Pope’s famous Tome, which was approved by the Council of Chalcedon. Here is an even more explicit statement, from the Catechism drawn up by orders of the Council of Trent:

“The same Jesus Christ our Lord, the Son of God, in assuming human flesh in the womb of a virgin, has not been conceived, like other men, from the seed of man, but in a manner transcending the whole order of nature, ‘He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost’.” (On Second Article of the Creed.)

As the Virginal Conception “transcends the whole order of Nature”, it is rightly said to be miraculous, and supernatural. But here again, the statement calls for amplification.

The miraculous character of an event does not necessarily exclude any and every natural aspect of it. One of St. Thomas’s categories of miracles is that which “*excedit aliquid facultatem naturae*”, not as to the substance of the fact itself, “*sed quantum ad modum et ordinem faciendi*” (*Summa Theologica*, I, q. 105, art. 8). And again, he says elsewhere that some miracles are not “*contra naturam*”, but “*praeter naturam*”, adding: “*Praeter naturam dicitur Deus facere quando producit effectum quern natura producere potest, illo tamen modo quo natura producere non potest*” (*Queest. Disp. De miraculis*, art. 2, ad. 3). Applying this, it might be possible to hold that the Virginal

¹ “Privilegium singulare beatae Virginis est in hoc, quod manens in omni puritate mentis et cotporis, non ex semine alieno sed de Spiritu Sancto concepit. Eva autem de semine viri.” (*Summa Theologiae* II, Tract. XIV, q. 84).

Conception was in fact miraculous quoad modum, but not necessarily quoad substantiam.

This would leave room for the hypothetical possibility of some kind of Virginal Conception, by natural means.

Amplifying this, we would like to urge that there is often an analogy between God's workings in the supernatural order, and some things which take place in the natural order. Further, in his supernatural acts, God often makes use of natural powers, so far as these may go. In this connection it is interesting to note that the same Tridentine Catechism which we quoted earlier in this chapter, adds that in the Mystery of the Incarnation, "there are certain things which transcend the order of nature, and other things within the compass of nature." It goes on to say that "it is common to every human body to be formed of the blood of the mother", but "what surpasses the order of nature is that as soon as the Blessed Virgin had given her consent to the message of the Angel . . . the most sacred body of Christ was immediately formed, to that body was united a soul capable of reason, and on that very instant He was both perfect God and perfect Man." Leaving aside the last portion of this important statement for later discussion, we would stress the first portion, and the principle it lays down: In the Incarnation, there are some things within the compass of nature.

Some light is thrown on this important principle if we link it up with the suggestion made by St. Augustine in his doctrine on miracles, that in some cases at least, created things may contain the "seminal potencies" of effects which are brought about in a wonderful or miraculous manner, either by angelic or divine power, acting through the instrumentality of these "seminal potencies."¹ Thus, St. Augustine suggests that the rib of Adam contained the "seminal reason" of Eve, who was subsequently formed from it by God.² Now, it is very significant that, in one passage, St. Augustine expressly argues from the possibility of the formation of Christ from that which was in Mary's womb, to the possibility of the formation of Eve from Adam's rib:

"Can a man be made from a woman without marital intercourse, and not also a woman from a man? Did the virginal womb have that from which a man could come, but the side of the male not that from which a woman could come?"³

¹ Cf. *Evolution and Theology*, by the present writer, pp. 292-302.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 260-265. Cf. next note.

³ *De Genesi ad litteram*. Lib. IX, cap. 16: "An vero sine cujusquam concubitu vir ex femina fieri potuit, femina ex viro non potuit, et virginalis uterus unde vir fieret habebat, virile autem latus unde femina fieret non habeat, cum his Dominus de famula nasceretur, ibi de servo famula formareretur?" A consideration of St. Augustine's view seems to

St. Augustine adds:

“The Lord could have created His flesh from a rib or another member of the Virgin.”¹

Thus, St. Augustine would seem to put the Virginal Conception in the class of miraculous events which make use of certain hidden seminal potencies in nature.

We may proceed to ask whether in fact there are any analogies to the Virginal Conception known to modern science. Some remarkable cases of parthenogenesis, and even of asexual generation, have been known to biologists for some time.² But hitherto these parallels have been found only in lower forms of life. There is a further point. Modern Biology has so far seemed to exclude the possibility of any virginal conception of a male human being by purely natural causes. For it has been established that a human ovum before fertilisation contains only “X” chromosomes, and that, in order to develop into a male, it would have to be fertilised by a spermatozoon containing a “Y” chromosome. If fertilised by a spermatozoon containing only “X” chromosomes, the ovum develops into a female. Hence, it would seem that as no male spermatozoon had any part in the Virginal Conception, and accordingly no “Y” chromosome was available, the Virginal Conception of Jesus Christ by Mary was altogether beyond the power of purely natural causes.³

But a recent writer associated with the University of Lille considers that modern research has thrown some further light upon this particular point. He remarks that “the chromosomic modification necessary for the change of sex cannot astonish a biologist”, and it would simply be a case of “a mutation of one of the sexual chromosomes” (Dr. M. D’Halluin, *Animation et Desanimation*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1944, p. 35). We should, of course, still have to seek for the cause of this mutation.

On the general question of the possibility of parthenogenesis in the human species, some recent experiments seem to show that the

show that, in his opinion, “the original causes of Eve rendered possible this mode of production, but did not necessitate it. God supplemented this indetermination, and chose this mode, which was within the power of the creature, but not necessitated by it” (*Evolution and Theology*, p. 263). Applied to the Virginal Conception, this would leave full scope for the divine intervention.

¹ “Poterat et Dominus carnem suam de costa vel de alio membro Virginis creare.”—*De Genesi ad litteram*. Lib. IX, cap. 16.

² See *Evolution and Theology*, pp. 269-270, and the article on Embryology in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

³ Cf. *Sex*, by Prof. F. A. E. Crew in *Outline of Modern Knowledge*, pp. 274 et seq., and Kenneth Walker, *Physiology of Sex*, pp. 21 et seq.

development of an unfertilised ovum must not be regarded as impossible, even in the human species, and also that a similar development of a male spermatozoon is equally feasible. In particular, A. Peyron and Limousin have found in some male testicular tissue some curious formations which seem to be tiny human embryos, corresponding to a fecundated ovum after a few days of development, and manifesting the "primitive line, and chordal canal, and primordial sexual cells" (Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Sciences, July 4th, 1938). Similarly, some virgins occasionally manifest certain tumours or cysts developing in an ovary or a Fallopian tube, containing hair, teeth, and even traces of vascular tissue. These are commonly regarded as resulting from the parthenogenetic development of an unfertilised ovum. Medical works mention cases in which a rudimentary foetus can be discerned. Dr. D'Halluin, from whom we derive this information, gives as reference Repin, *Origine parthenogenetique des kystes dermatoides de l'ovaire*, Paris 1891. He adds that according to Morel (*Traite d'histologie* de Strasbourg, 1864), the segmentation of the ovum in these cases clearly follows the normal course. Dr. D'Halluin himself says categorically that "artificially provoked parthenogenetic segmentation is now a proved fact," adding that "it can even take place spontaneously." It seems that the only reason why these developing ova do not reach their full term and become true human beings is the absence of suitable surroundings, and Dr. D'Halluin apparently considers that if they could be transplanted into a suitable prepared uterus, a full human being would develop in due course.

There is a difficulty here. The sexual gametes each contain only one half of the chromosomes characteristic of the species, and full and complete development of an unfertilised ovum into a viable individual would necessitate the doubling of the number of chromosomes in the ovum. But Dr. D'Halluin remarks that such doubling has been known to occur spontaneously or can be induced artificially {op. cit., p. 32, n. 4}.

The writer we have been quoting concludes that "from the purely biological point of view, there is nothing against the development in the mammals and even in man, of a parthenogenetic embryo, if circumstances favourable to its development are present. Applied to the Virginal Conception, this would show once more that even in miraculous facts, God follows the general laws of nature" {op. cit., p. 34}.

The last statement seems somewhat exaggerated, and its wording is perhaps unfortunate. But these modern discoveries are interesting as presenting some possible analogies to the Virginal Conception. But at once we are faced with a difficulty. Does not Dogmatic

Tradition insist that a virginal conception in the sense of *conceptio sine semine* transcends the whole order of Nature, to use the words of the Tridentine Catechism, or that it is, in the words of Albertus Magnus, the “singular privilege” of the Blessed Virgin?

Some of the preceding remarks indicate that a solution of this difficulty might be sought in the theory that miracles are quite compatible with the existence of certain hidden “seminal potencies” which are utilised by the Creator when miracles are performed. As yet, apart from the Incarnation, no human being has ever come into existence without a human father. And in spite of modern researches, it seems unlikely that any such event will ever take place. But it is not impossible that God in His Wisdom may have utilised certain hidden potencies in the Virginal Conception of Our Lord.

We now pass on to the development of what, for want of a better term, we may perhaps be permitted to call “the embryonic Christ in his mother’s womb”.

There are some points of Catholic doctrine which we must emphasise at the outset. The first is that the Incarnation took place when Our Lady uttered her “fiat” at the Annunciation. Secondly, Catholic Tradition and Theology asserts that the Incarnation was the work of an indivisible moment. All took place instantaneously, though we can distinguish certain logical stages in it. Thus, the Holy Ghost formed a human body in Mary’s Womb, infused a human soul into it, and united the resulting complete human nature to the Person of the Son of God. But it is of faith that there was no moment of time when the human nature of Christ existed, prior to its assumption by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Had it existed separately, even for a moment, it would have been a human person. But it is an essential part of the Catholic Faith that there is and has ever been only one Person in Jesus Christ, the Person of God the Son. Hence, the human nature of Christ never existed before its assumption by the Divinity—not even for an infinitesimal fraction of a second. Thirdly, it follows from what we have just explained, that the human nature of Jesus Christ was true, perfect and complete from the moment of the Incarnation. That is to say, it comprised a truly human body, and a human soul, with all that these imply and require.

This leads us to the question as to the existence and nature of the growth of the embryonic Christ in Mary’s womb. There is, of course considerable growth and development in the nine months during which a child is being formed in his mother’s womb, and all theologians agree that the embryonic Christ developed and increased in size in his mother’s womb. But the fact that we are required by

dogmatic tradition to hold that Jesus Christ had a true, perfect and complete human nature from the commencement necessitates a further study. First, we may ask ourselves, what precisely was the first stage of this development in the womb of Mary? In other words, what was it that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity assumed at the Incarnation? In what precisely did this true, perfect and complete human nature exist?

It will help to clarify the problem if we first explain the stages through which a normally fertilised human ovum passes. First, in normal conception, the fertilised ovum, which has united with the spermatozoon, and has begun its existence as a single cell, divides and subdivides very rapidly, forming first a "morula", then a "gastrula", and later a well-defined human foetus, and finally a human embryo, which continues to grow and develop until the time arrives for it to enter the outside world.

As we have said, the starting point is a single cell, the ovum fertilised by the spermatozoon. But this point is a comparatively modern discovery. The general fact of embryological development was indeed known to the ancients, and it was described in some detail by Aristotle in the fourth century before Christ. But Aristotle himself thought that the female element in generation is a form of blood, akin to the menstrual discharge, and that the male element is similarly a concocted form of blood, containing a certain "spiritus". But neither the male or female element in generation was regarded as being endowed with life, until the act of conception. In conception, the male parent was regarded as imparting life to the female element, through the semen, acting as an instrument of male generative power. The female "blood", thus subjected to the generative process, was gradually formed into a human being. But in so doing, it was considered to pass through certain intermediate stages. First it was characterised by vegetative life, and was therefore regarded as possessing a transient vegetative life form. This gave place to an animal form, as the process of generation continued, and lastly, when a sufficiently developed stage was reached, the foetus was considered to be truly human, and to possess a human life principle. This conception was expressed philosophically in the Mediate Animation theory, according to which there is in the human embryo a succession of life forms, first vegetable, then animal, and finally human. The human soul was considered to come into existence only when the embryo in the womb had attained a sufficiently high degree of development—in fact, precisely that degree without which human life is impossible.

This Mediate Animation theory was held throughout the Middle Ages, and indeed much later. It is taken for granted by the Catechism

of the Council of Trent.¹ But in the seventeenth century, another theory was introduced, the Immediate Animation theory, according to which the human soul is present in the womb from the first moment of conception. This theory was widely adopted in place of the older theory, because it was thought that the latter was not in accordance with some new facts which were then being discovered. As I have written elsewhere,

“At first it was thought that the foetus has a perfect human organisation (brain, heart, liver, etc.) very shortly after fecundation. Then, after the discovery of the Graafian vesicle, which was thought to be the human ovum, the proligerate cumulus was taken for the embryo, and certain observers thought they could clearly distinguish in it the principal parts of the human body, though not yet living, since the heart was not yet beating. From this it was naturally inferred that the action of the sperm consists in giving life to this non-living, but perfectly or almost perfectly organised entity.” (Involution and Theology.)

But we now know that these ideas were based upon faulty observation. The true human ovum was discovered only well on into the nineteenth century. And of course our knowledge has increased greatly with improved methods of observation.

Philosophical and theological ideas normally keep pace, or should keep pace, with the state of scientific knowledge. But we must allow for a certain time lag. Thus, we still speak of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ as being formed from “the most pure blood of the Blessed Virgin”, in accordance with the ideas prevalent in early and medieval times. But we now know that the immediate beginning of a human being is, not precisely blood, but a human ovum. Similarly, our knowledge of the development of the human foetus and embryo has greatly increased. But nevertheless, the Immediate Animation theory still seems to be held by the majority of theologians. Even so, it is the considered opinion of the present writer that the facts as we now know them are interpreted best by the older Mediate Animation theory.² Leaving a discussion of this subject for another

¹ The Tridentine Catechism, after saying that “what surpasses the order of nature and even the power of human comprehension is this, that as soon as the Blessed Virgin had given her consent to the message of the angel . . . the most sacred body of Christ was immediately formed, to that body was united a soul capable of reason, etc.,” adds the following comment: “That this new and wonderful effect was the work of the Holy Ghost can be doubted by no one, for according to the ordinary laws of nature, the rational soul is united to the body only after a certain lapse of time.” In other words, the Tridentine Catechism sets the seal of its authority upon the Mediate Animation theory. But one must not infer from this fact that that theory is Defide.

² “An interesting account of the origin and development of the theory of the ‘immediate animation’ of the human foetus by the rational soul is contained in the *Jfmbyrologia Sacra* of Cangiamila, a work published by an ardent defender of the theory.

work, I will at least venture to point out here that the latest researches concerning the spontaneous development of unfertilised ova in females, and the corresponding segmentation of spermatozoa in males, must present considerable difficulties to those who still hold the Immediate Animation theory. For, on the analogy of normal conception and development, we are presumably bound to hold that a human soul is present in these developing ova and spermatozoa, which are nevertheless doomed to die before they can come to term. Clinical baptism seems quite impossible under the circumstances, and we seem forced to the conclusion that millions of human beings are thus coming into existence, without the slightest possibility of ever receiving Christian baptism.

Leaving aside this point, then, which really is not connected with our present subject, we may ask how the fact of embryological development is to be harmonised with the theological truth that the Incarnation was instantaneous, and that there was at that moment a true, perfect and complete human nature in Mary's womb. In particular, we may ask how St. Thomas reconciled these two principles.

He did so by postulating a special miracle. He held that, at the moment of the Incarnation, the female element in Mary's womb (which, as we have said, he regarded as blood, for the ovum was then unknown) was endowed by the Holy Ghost instantaneously with the advanced state of organisation required, on his theory, for information by a human soul. St. Thomas's statement will be found in his *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 33, art. 1 and 2. Even so, as we have said, St. Thomas allows for further development and growth of the embryonic Christ. (See *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 33, art. 1 and ad 4.)

What, on the other hand, is the position of those who hold the Immediate Animation theory, according to which the human soul is present from the moment an ovum is fertilised? This is not an easy question to answer, as few authors seem to deal with it. But I have heard it urged, as a point in favour of this theory, that it does not require the miracle postulated by St. Thomas. In other words, it would seem that those who hold the Immediate Animation theory are prepared to allow that the embryonic Christ developed as all other human embryos develop, except of course that there was no human act of fertilisation of the ovum. But apart from that, those who hold this theory presumably allow that the foetus passed

at a period (1745-1758) when it had reached its apogee. This was quite legitimate at the time. On the other hand, we are not exaggerating in the least when we regard the fact that this theory should still find defenders long after the experimental bases on which it was thought to be founded have been shown definitely to be false, as one of the most shameful things in the history of thought."—*Darwinism and Catholic Thought*, by Canon Henry de Lorlodot, D.D., D.Sc. (Louvain), translated by E. C. Messenger, 1922, p. 107.

through the stages we have mentioned above, i.e., the “morula”, “gastrula”, “foetus”, and “embryo”.

It may at once be urged that it seems difficult to reconcile this with the datum of dogmatic Tradition, that there was from the first moment of the Incarnation, a “true, perfect and complete” human nature in Mary’s womb. For, at first, the developing ovum manifests and is capable only of vegetative life. Next it manifests and is capable of animal life. And finally it is capable of human life. But given that the intellectual soul is “essentialiter et per se” the form of the human body—as was defined by the Council of Vienne—we may well ask how the human soul of Christ could have been present as the form of a body which was incapable of even animal life.

One way out of this difficulty, of course, would be to postulate a miracle similar to that postulated by St. Thomas. But then we should be faced with another difficulty. If instantaneously a comparatively advanced stage of development was reached, would not the time of gestation be correspondingly reduced? And in that case should we not have to shorten the traditional period of nine months which elapsed between the Annunciation and the Nativity? Possibly the Church is not committed irrevocably to the period of nine months gestation. That is for the Magisterium of the Church to declare.

In the meantime, what do we gather from the declarations of the Magisterium? First, we have the clear assertion of the complete and perfect character of Christ’s human nature, presumably from the commencement. Thus, Pope Leo says in his *Tom*: “*In integra veri hominis perfectaque natura verus natus est Deus.*” That, it is true, refers especially to the moment of birth. But the implication surely is that it applies to every moment of Our Lord’s existence as man. The Athanasian Creed similarly speaks of Christ as “*perfectus Deus, perfectus homo, ex anima rationali et humana carne subsistens.*” A more explicit statement is found in St. John Damascene: “*Ut enim caro extitit, simul quoque Dei Verbi caro extitit, simul card animata, rationis atque intelligentiae particeps*” (*De fide orthod.*, Lib. III, cap. 2). These certainly seem to imply that “animated flesh, capable of reason and intelligence” was present in Mary’s womb from the first moment. Moreover, if, as Catholic tradition asserts, St. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother’s womb by Our Lord, present in the womb of Mary, at the Visitation, and if, as Tradition also asserts, the Visitation followed almost immediately after the Annunciation when the Incarnation took place, then there was obviously in Mary’s womb at that moment a “true, perfect and complete” human nature capable of acting as the instrument of Our Lord for the working of a miracle.

We thus seem to be led back to a miracle similar to that postulated by St. Thomas, with the consequent logical necessity of shortening the usual period of nine months' gestation. In any case, the miracle thus postulated is not in itself an unreasonable one. For one of the accepted categories of miracles consists precisely in the instantaneous production of changes which normally require a certain lapse of time, and some of the miracles worked by Jesus Christ and recorded in the Gospels are precisely of this character. Instances would be cures from fevers, as recorded in John iv, 46-53, Matt, viii, 14-15, etc. Why should it be unreasonable that a miracle of the same character should have taken place in Christ's conception?

We must add that there seems no possibility in advancing any hypothesis of a partial development of the unfertilised ovum in Mary's womb, prior to the Incarnation itself, analogous to the segmentation and development which is said to have been observed in recent times, without encountering the gravest possible difficulties and objections, which would far outweigh the doubtful advantage of rendering unnecessary the miracle postulated by St. Thomas. For the question would at once arise as to the agent in this development. St. Joseph is of course excluded by the whole doctrine of the Virginal Conception. Any special activity by the Holy Ghost, thus preparing the ovum in Mary's womb prior to the Incarnation, seems to be excluded by the assertion of Tradition that the activity of the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb began only at the Annunciation. We should thus be left with the doubtful and dangerous hypothesis of the spontaneous development of an unfertilised ovum in Mary's womb, prior to the Incarnation, which would take place presumably only when the human stage was about to be reached. We may well decline to consider such a dangerous hypothesis, in the present state of theology and science.

We have ventured to discuss this difficult and delicate matter, though doubtless some would urge that we ought not to pry into such sacred mysteries. But surely, provided we exercise all due reverence and humility, we may do our best to try to understand the meaning and significance of the great truths of our Faith, and thus imitate the attitude of the Church's great theologians in the past.

There we can leave the discussion of this delicate matter. In any case, we repeat that there are some things which are perfectly clear, and certain. The first is that, at the moment of the Incarnation, that which was in Mary's womb became specifically and truly human, and was assumed by the Divinity. Secondly, between the Incarnation and the birth of our Lord, the embryonic Christ went through a certain process of development and growth, analogous to that of other human beings. The third certainty is that the Son of God

dwelt for several months, if not nine, in the womb of His blessed Mother, who was all the time performing the functions of a mother, protecting, feeding and promoting the growth of the embryonic Christ within her—a truth which must ever stimulate our reverent wonder and devotion. We may well reflect, with a recent writer:

“Here is no fusion of germ-cells. Our Lord’s is a virgin birth. The whole of the perfect humanity of Jesus is to be formed from. Our Lady, ex Maria Virgine. ‘He, whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, was enclosed within her,’ not merely as He dwells in the Tabernacle, not as He is enclosed within us in the Blessed Sacrament, not even only, wonderful as that is to contemplate, as a human babe within her, as every human babe in its mother, drawing his nourishment from her, growing through her means, protected by her body—but made from her alone, of her substance only.”¹

And then we can sing with the Church in the words of the hymn *Quern terra, pontus, sidera*:

The Lord, whom earth and air and sea
With one adoring voice resound,
Who rules them all in majesty.
In Mary’s heart a cloister found.

Lo! in a humble Virgin’s womb
O’ershadow’d by almighty power.
He whom the stars, and sun, and moon
Each serve in their appointed hour!

O Mother blest! to whom was given
Within thy compass to contain
The architect of earth and heaven,
Whose hands the universe sustain.

The significance of all this for the sacredness of motherhood is surely obvious. On an earlier page² we quoted St. Augustine as saying that Our Lord could have formed His body from any part of the Blessed Virgin. He continues thus: “Sed utilius in matris corpore ostendit nihil pudendum esse quod castum est,”—“Our Lord more usefully shows (in willing to be made in the Virgin’s womb) that there is no place for shame in that which is chaste.” The Virgin’s womb, then, was chaste. Those who have regarded the

¹ C. Symonds, *A Great Mystery of Inheritance*, p. 19.

² P. 90.

external genital organs of a female as “*partes minus honestae*” of the human body, surely do not realise the inconsistency of such a notion with the fact of the Incarnation. There is no room for shame in that which is chaste. Well may we say to Mary with St. Elizabeth: “Blessed is the fruit of thy womb!” (Luke i, 42), and to Our Lord with the woman in the Gospel: “Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!” (Luke, xxiii, 29). We must note that Our Lord did not deny this blessedness of Mary’s womb, but pointed out that his mother was also blessed for higher reasons. He did not say: “Nay,” but “Yea,” adding: “Rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.” The one blessedness does not exclude the other. Mary certainly possessed the higher blessedness, for she “kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke ii, 19). But this blessedness did not exclude the blessedness of her womb, resulting from her physical maternity.

It might, however, be objected that, in the *Te Deum*, the Church encourages us to regard even the Virgin’s womb as a fit subject for abhorrence, so that it is a matter for wonder and surprise that in fact Our Lord did not abhor His Mother’s womb:

“Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem.
Non abhorruisti Virginis uterum.”

“Thou, when about to take upon thyself manhood to liberate it, didst not abhor the Virgin’s womb.”

We would answer that we have here no more than a reference to Our Lord’s condescension in consenting to be formed in His Mother’s womb, as are all other human beings. Thus, we have here ultimately a reference to the supreme humiliation of the Incarnation itself—a humiliation which is stressed by St. Paul in *Philippians* ii, 7: “He emptied himself by taking the nature of a slave, and becoming like unto men” (*Westminster Version*). The verse in the *Te Deum* need not, and surely does not signify that Mary’s womb was indecent or impure or that the process of human gestation is in any way nasty or unpleasant. In St. Augustine’s words, “nothing chaste should be a subject of shame.” If we bear these words in mind, we shall no longer be tempted to regard the organs of generation, male or female, or their use according to God’s law and will, as shameful or indecent.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION

III. THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF OUR LORD

HAVING discussed the Virginal Conception, often called the “Virgin Birth”, we can now turn to what really was the Virginal Birth, namely, the actual bringing into the world of the Son of God made Man. The Catholic Church professes her belief in this in the words of the Apostles’ Creed which follow the expression of belief in the Virginal Conception:

“Who was conceived of the Holy Ghost,
Born of the Virgin Mary.”

This article of the Creed implies not merely the Virginal Conception, but also the Virginal Birth, i.e., the doctrine that Mary, not only in conceiving the Holy Child, but also in bringing Him into the world, remained throughout a Virgin. For it is precisely as a Virgin that she is said to have given birth to her Divine Son, and St. Matthew expressly quotes in this regard the prophecy of Isaias, thus:

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son.”

Virginity, as we have seen, consists materially in the physical integrity of the membrane known as the hymen. Hence, as Dr. Hugh Pope has written:

“The virginal conception and birth of Christ means that, in the case of his Mother, the physical seal of virginity, known to the medical faculty as the ‘hymen’, was broken neither by marital relations with a husband, nor by the issuing of the Child from the womb.”¹

Explaining and amplifying this doctrine, St. John Damascene points out that there was no pain in the birth of Christ (De Fide Orthodox., IV, 15). St. Bernard likewise writes that Christ was “conceived without shame, and born without sorrow” (Sermo de Virginis Nativitate, 4). St. Thomas Aquinas sets forth the matter thus:

¹ Cambridge Summer School Lectures on Our Lady, pp. 126-127.

“The pain of childbirth is caused by the opening of the passages through which the child comes forth. But Christ came out of the closed womb of his mother, and so there was no violence of the opening of passages. And hence in that birth there was no pain, and no corruption, but there was the greatest joy, in that the God-Man was born into the world, as we read in Isaiah xxxv, 2.”¹

We may note, in passing, that, according to St. Thomas, some have explained the physical integrity of Our Lady in the birth of her child by supposing that Christ assumed then the quality of subtilty which belonged to His Body after the Resurrection. St. Thomas himself rejects this explanation, and prefers to say that the event took place by a miracle.^{1 2} Even so, it is interesting to note that some writers³ have suggested an explanation which would not involve a special miracle.

We have already mentioned that other suggestions have been advanced in the past, and that in particular, Durandus suggested that the Virginal Birth might be explained by an expansion and relaxation of the birth passages, without the rupture of the hymen. Suarez, as we have pointed out, roundly rejects this idea as heretical—“haereticus esset”.⁴ But we may be permitted to wonder whether, in asserting the Virginitas in partu, the Church’s Dogmatic Tradition intends to assert also the particular physiological interpretation of it which excludes the idea of Durandus. Writing on the Virgin Birth, Father Martindale states that, while the Church insists that Mary throughout remained a virgin, she imposes “no further commentary upon, nor physiological deductions from her doctrine.”⁵

Is it, then, entirely unthinkable that, if motherhood in the state of innocence would have taken place in a manner which would have respected physical virginity as this is usually understood, i.e., with the hymen remaining unbroken, as some Fathers and theologians have suggested in the past,⁶ Our Lord’s birth from Mary might have taken place in an analogous way? After all, the virginal motherhood in the state of innocence advocated by the writers mentioned, would have been a consequence of the preternatural gifts imparted to our

¹ “Dolor parientis causatur ex apertione meatuum, per quos proles egreditur . . . Christus est egressus ex clauso utero matris: et sic nulla violentia apertionis meatuum ibi fuit. Et propter hoc, in illo partu nullus fuit dolor, sicut nec aliqua corruptio; sed fuit ibi maxima jucunditas ex hoc quod homo Deus est natus in mundum. . . —Summa Theologica, HI, q. 35, art. 6.

² Summa Theologica, IH, q. 28, art. 2, ad. 3.

³ St. Thomas does not name them.

⁴ See quotation on p. 28, n. 2.

⁵ The Virgin Birth, C.T.S., p. 1.

⁶ See pp. 26-28.

first parents. These gifts, as we have seen, were four in number. The first, immunity from concupiscence, was similarly enjoyed by Our Blessed Lady. The second, immunity from ignorance through infused knowledge, doubtless had its counterpart in Our Lady's knowledge of her dignity and state—though there is no more need to exaggerate the character and extent of this infused knowledge in Mary than there was in Adam. The third gift, immunity from physical pain, was at least possessed partially by Our Blessed Lady, in that she suffered no pains of childbirth.¹ The fourth gift, immunity from physical death, was certainly not possessed by Our Lady, though in fact some have not hesitated to attribute it to her. But there were special reasons why she should not enjoy immunity from death.²

Now, we have set forth the principle that the ideal of the Redeemed Life is the restoration of Man as he was in the state of innocence. That ideal can never be realised perfectly in this life: its consummation is reserved for the next world (and then, of course, it will be modified by the conditions of the Risen Life). But is it quite impossible that, in Our Lady's case, the privilege of the state of innocence in the matter of childbirth was granted to her, seeing that some other privileges of the same or a similar kind were given her?

It is certainly curious that there are several passages in early Fathers which seem to suggest that, in point of fact, the birth of Christ did open Our Lady's womb. One of these occurs, indeed, in a work written by Tertullian after his defection from the Church. But similar statements are found in St. Ambrose and other quite orthodox fathers. The student will find a careful discussion of these statements in Petavius.³ He remarks that all these passages admit of a satisfactory explanation. Certainly, many of them seem to be no more than repetitions or paraphrases of St. Luke's account of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. St. Luke says that this took place in fulfilment of the legal prescription that "Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord" (Genesis xvii, 12; Leviticus xii, 3; Luke ii, 23). Petavius has no difficulty in showing that the rest of Catholic Tradition is quite clear on Mary's physical virginity. But if the suggestion we have made above were an acceptable one, we should, at least, have an even more satisfactory explanation of the statements and phraseology of the group of writers in question.

In any hypothesis, the Virginal Conception and Birth of Jesus by

¹ It must be remembered that birth pangs are indicated in Genesis as a punishment for Eve's sin, and that this sin involved the withdrawal of the immunity from pain and suffering.

² See a discussion of this subject in Pohl-Preuss, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

³ *De Incarnatione*, Lib. XIV, cap. 5.

Mary must for ever remain wonderful and mysterious, and we cannot do better than close this part of our subject with the following words of St. Augustine:

“Let us allow that God can do some things which we confess ourselves to be unable to investigate: in such things, the whole explanation of the fact is to be sought in the power of the Doer.”¹

¹ “*Demus Deum aliquid posse quod nos fateamur investigate non posse. In talibus, tota ratio facti est potentia facientis.*”—*Ep. ad Volus.*, Migne, P.L., Vol. 33, col. J19.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION

IV. THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF OUR LADY

The Church's Dogmatic Tradition not only asserts Mary's virginity in the Conception and Birth of Our Lord, but also insists that she remained a virgin throughout her natural life. This presents no special difficulty, other than the identity of those who are called in the New Testament the "brethren" and "sisters" of Jesus. These were probably cousins, but their exact relationship is not clear. Some of the early Fathers, both Greek and Latin, thought they were children of St. Joseph by a former marriage, but they were doubtless led to favour this view through attaching too much credence to statements to this effect found in the Apocryphal Gospels. Since the time of St. Jerome at least, Catholic opinion has strongly held that St. Joseph, like his spouse, observed perpetual virginity, and this, of course, would rule out his possession of children by a former marriage.

There remain two points to discuss concerning Our Lady's Virginity. One is the question how she came to choose a virginal life. That she had made such a choice is evident from her words to the angel at the Annunciation: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" Such words in an espoused maiden would be meaningless, unless she had already resolved to lead a virginal life.¹ It is certainly remarkable that she should have done so, especially in view of the traditional Jewish antipathy towards such a life.² But the existence of virginity and celibacy among people like the Essenes in Our Lord's time shows that, in some circles at least, virginity had come to be esteemed, and we may well think that this choice of a virginal life in Our Lady's case was the result of a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

The second point concerns the question if and when Our Lady made a vow of virginity. It is the common teaching that she did in

¹ Incidentally, Our Lady's question also shows that, whatever infused knowledge she may have had, she did not understand the full meaning of the famous text in Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive. . . ." For, though she was invited to be the Mother of the Messiah, she did not then realise that such motherhood was compatible with virginity.

²See Part One, p. 31.

fact make such a vow. But theologians are not agreed as to when it was made. Some have thought that Mary had made it before the Annunciation, and that this is implied in her words to the angel, "I know not man." But it seems almost impossible to maintain that the marriage between Our Lady and St. Joseph was a true marriage if one of the parties was in fact bound at the time by a vow of virginity. Marriage is essentially a contract whereby each party gives to the other rights over his or her own body, with a view to the performance of sexual acts. The right must be given, even though there may be a mutual agreement not to exercise it. But in our opinion, the right itself could not be given if Our Lady had made an absolute and unconditional vow of virginity at that time. It seems useless to urge, as some writers do, that Our Lady could still give the radical or remote right to sexual acts, but not the proximate right, in view of such a vow. These words, when analysed, simply mean that she could not give the right in question, and that, in our opinion, is tantamount to saying that she could not marry. It is important to note that according to St. Thomas Aquinas, Mary's choice of virginity made prior to her marriage was not an absolute but only a conditional one, i.e., if God should so will:

"It is not believed that the Mother of God made a vow of virginity absolutely before she was married to Joseph, but although virginity was her desire, she submitted her will in this matter to the divine judgment. But subsequently, when she had accepted her spouse as the custom of that time required, she made a vow of virginity, together with him."¹

Similarly, St. Thomas even allows that Mary and Joseph gave a conditional assent in their marriage to carnal intercourse, should that be God's will.²

Other writers may prefer a different view. But, as Dr. Cartmell remarks, "the better theological opinion maintains with St. Bernard

1 "*Mater Dei non creditor, antequam desponsaretur Joseph, absolute virginitatem vovisse, sed licet earn in desiderio habuerit, super hoc tamen voluntatem suam divino comisit arbitrio. Postmodum vero, accepto sponso secundum quod mores illius temporis exigebant, simul cum eo votum virginitatis emisit*" (*Summa Theologica*, III, q. 28, art. 4).

2 "*Uterque consensit in copulam conjugalem, non autem expresse in copulam carnalem nisi sub conditione, si Deo placeret*" (*Summa Theologica*, III, q. 29, art. 2). Neither of these important statements of St. Thomas is adverted to by the Rev. J. C. Ford, S.J., in his doctoral thesis at the Gregorian University in 1938, *The Validity of Virginal Marriage*. Instead, Dr. Ford actually writes as follows: "All authors admit that the marriage of the Blessed Virgin was a true marriage, and that nevertheless she entered it with an obligation not to have intercourse, that is, it is common opinion that the Blessed Virgin had a vow of chastity when she married St. Joseph." (p. 131, italics ours.)

that Mary was prepared to sacrifice her vow for the Divine Motherhood, if God would not reconcile the two, for she preferred, as was worthy of her, the Divine Will above everything.”¹

¹ Dr. Ford also asserts that “all are agreed that persons with vows of chastity, who intend to keep their vows, can enter marriage validly”. There is room for a distinction here. As St. Thomas remarks, *Summa Theologica*, III, Supph, q. 53, art. 1, a simple vow of chastity does not prevent a valid marriage, because such a vow is merely a “simple promise”, and after it one still remains “the lord and master of one’s own body”, and can therefore give it to another”. But on the other hand, as St. Thomas says in art. 2 of the same question, by a solemn vow of chastity, one loses the power over one’s body, and therefore cannot give it to another in marriage, and accordingly, a marriage which follows such a vow is null and void.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE MORAL CORRUPTION OF THE PAGAN WORLD IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

We are now in a position to begin our study of the teaching of the New Testament and of the Catholic Church on matters of sex. But, just as the Old Testament teaching can be appreciated properly only by bearing in mind the great sexual corruption which existed in the surrounding nations—a corruption which was all the worse because it was sanctified in the name of religion—so also we shall better appreciate the New Testament teaching, or at least certain aspects of it, if we bear in mind the similar moral corruption so widespread in the Roman and Greek civilisations in the time of Our Lord and his Apostles. This will bring home to us the contrast between pagan impurity and Christian chastity, and the need for special safeguards of the latter.

It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that the official Pantheon of Greece and Rome was saturated through and through with immoral notions. The amours of these pagan deities make very unsavoury reading, and it is surprising that these exalted human cultures, which produced such masterpieces in art and literature, should have been characterised by such unworthy religious conceptions. The official religions were bad enough, but the oriental cults imported into the Empire were even more vile. We need no more than mention the Bacchanalian orgies, or the vile practices associated with the worship of Dionysus.¹ We have abundant echoes in the New Testament of the immorality which accompanied the worship in pagan temples. Particularly evil was that which took place in the temples of Corinth and Ephesus. In the latter place, sacred prostitution was rife, and it was by no means unknown elsewhere. Ordinary fornication was quite common, and indeed condoned, and this explains the constant references to this matter found in the New Testament. Also, one of the worst features of pagan civilisation at that time was the unnatural vice of paederastia or homosexuality, so strongly condemned by St. Paul in his first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It is all the more regrettable to have to record that this shameful vice was condoned, and even to some extent approved, by pagan philosophers.²

¹ On all these matters, see St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Lib. III, cap. 80; Lib. VII, caps. 21, 26, etc.

² For details, see Dbllinger, *Gentile and Jew*, Vols. I and II.

There were, of course, other much more commendable features, both in pagan religion, and still more in pagan philosophy. The Mystery religions undoubtedly prepared the way, to some extent, for the Christian Mysteries, and the exalted ideas of Stoicism constituted a kind of *praeparatio evangelica*. Yet the black spots remained, and no amount of whitewashing will remove them. It must always be remembered that these immoral features of pagan culture and civilisation in Greece and Rome at the beginning of the Christian era are naturally not thought suitable subjects for treatment in popular books on the period, meant for family reading, and it must equally be remembered that many pagan classics, whether in Greek or Latin, are usually read only in expurgated editions.

All this will help us to understand what we may call the Christian reaction to this widespread immorality, and to appreciate the revolutionary change constituted by the moral and especially the sexual ideas of the Christian religion.

We have said nothing as to the moral state of Judaism in Our Lord's time. We will merely say that Judaism was characterised by a fierce attachment to the literal observance of the Old Law on the one hand, and by a neglect of its spirit on the other. In addition, though polygamy had ceased to be practised, easy divorce had taken its place. Here again we shall see what a remarkable revolution was brought about by the teaching of Our Lord and his Apostles on this subject.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE TEACHING OF THE GOSPELS ON SEX, MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY

The chief and most important contribution of the New Testament revelation to the subject of sex is the elevation of marriage to the rank and dignity of a Christian sacrament. This matter will be dealt with specially in a later chapter. It is important to note already that the sacramental character of matrimony is not proved from Scripture, but is hinted at or implied there.

In point of fact, some theologians have held that matrimony was always a sacrament, in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Leaving aside this difficult question for the time being, we turn now to some more obvious features in the New Testament teaching on marriage and sex. It will, however, be useful for us to bear in mind the theological distinction between marriage as a lifelong contract, made between two parties, and marriage as a sacrament, i.e., as a means of grace. The two are not adequately distinct, for, as the Code of Canon Law states (Canon 1,012), baptised Christians cannot enter the contract of matrimony without thereby receiving the sacrament of matrimony. It is the contract of matrimony which has itself been raised to the dignity of a sacrament (Canon 1,012). Even so, there are some qualities which belong to the contract as such, and others which belong to the contract as raised to the dignity of a sacrament.

The first point which we notice in studying the New Testament teaching on sex is that Our Lord fully accepted marriage as a divine institution, but at the same time excluded certain imperfections which had, in the course of time, become attached to it, and in particular, that of divorce. The classical passages in this connection are the references to marriage in the Sermon on the Mount ('Matthew v, 31-32), and the later statement in Judea (Matt, xix, 3-10). The statement in the Sermon on the Mount is peculiar to St. Matthew. Here it is, according to the Westminster Version:

“It was said: ‘Whosoever putteth away his wife, let him give her a writ of divorce.’ (Dent, xxix, 1-4). But I tell you that every man that putteth away his wife, save on account of impurity, maketh her to suffer adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away, committeth adultery.”

There are two obscurities here in the text. One is concerned with the exact meaning of the Greek construction *parektos*, which is here translated as "save. . . . Some scholars urge that it rather has the meaning: "leaving aside for the moment the case of impurity, with which I am not here dealing," and that accordingly. Our Lord is not here implying that, in the case of impurity, divorce is legitimate.

Another difficulty arises out of the Greek word *pomeia*, here translated as "impurity". It is certainly not the word usually employed to signify adultery. Some scholars urge that, in fact, it signifies pre-matrimonial sin, and hence it is usually rendered as "fornication", and not as "adultery". These scholars argue that Our Lord must have had in mind a special kind of pre-matrimonial fornication, which in fact rendered the marriage itself invalid.¹

Even if we accept the passage as it stands, it remains true that the exception, "save on account of impurity," is attached by Our Lord only to the "putting away" of a wife. The second half of the statement is absolute, and no exception is expressed: "whosoever marrieth her that is put away, committeth adultery". This text thus receives a satisfactory interpretation in the traditional Catholic view that, while adultery is a sufficient reason for a separation between husband and wife, it does not dissolve the marriage bond itself, or make another marriage permissible during the lifetime of the partners in question.

The second passage in St. Matthew's Gospel is, if anything, clearer, and it is especially interesting because we have parallel versions in St. Mark and St. Luke. Here is St. Matthew's presentation, according to the Westminster Version:

"And Pharisees came up to him, tempting him and saying: 'Is it lawful to put away one's wife for any and every cause?'

"And he answered and said, 'Have ye not read that from the beginning, the Creator "made them male and female", and said, "therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but they are one flesh. What God, then, hath joined together, let no man put asunder.'

"They say to him: 'Why, then, did Moses command to give a bill of divorce, and to put away?'

"He saith to them, 'Because of your stubbornness of heart Moses permitted you to put away your wives, but it was not so from the beginning. And I say to you, whosoever putteth away

¹ See a discussion of this matter in *Clergy Review* for April and July, 1941. Also *The Gospels and Divorce*, in same review for Oct., 1943; W. K. Lowther Clarke, *New Testament Problems*, pp. 59-63, and Mgr. Barton's note to MacRory, *New Testament and Divorce*, p. 89. See also article by Canon Arendzen in *Expositor*, Nov., 1918.

his wife, except for impurity, and marrieth another woman, he committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery.' ”

St. Mark's version of this incident is as follows :x

“Pharisees came up and asked him, tempting him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?’ But he answered and said to them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ And they said, ‘Moses permitted us to “write a bill of divorce and to put her away”.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your stubbornness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, “male and female he made them; therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh.” What God, then, hath joined together, let no man put asunder.’ And on coming indoors, the disciples questioned him again on this matter, and he saith to them, ‘Whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery against her; and she, if she put away her husband and marry another, committeth adultery.’ ”

St. Luke merely records that Our Lord said to the Pharisees: “Every man that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery” (Luke xvi, 18).

Now, it is well known that most modern non-Catholic scholars hold that St. Mark's Gospel was the first to be written. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, adheres to the testimony of early tradition, which asserts that first St. Matthew wrote his Gospel, in Aramaic, and that St. Mark wrote his own Gospel later, in Greek. The difference has its bearing upon the question of the original form of the statement of Jesus. If modern scholars are right, then obviously the original form is that given by St. Mark, which omits any exception for the case of “impurity”. But that will not suit our modern scholars. They wish to hold on at all costs to the priority of Mark, and at the same time to hold that the exceptive clause as given by St. Matthew really formed part of the original statement of Our Lord. Their attempts to justify this strange position are indeed ludicrous. The curious reader will find a good example of their ingenuity in Archdeacon Charles's work entitled *The Teaching of the New Testament on Divorce*, 1921.

We Catholics hold that St. Matthew wrote first, and that the

l This, and all other New Testament quotations, are given according to the Westminster Version.

exceptive clause accordingly formed part of Our Lord's original statement. Its exact form is somewhat uncertain, and must remain so in the absence of the Aramaic original of the Gospel. But we argue that it applies, in any case, only to the "putting away", and that accordingly it is omitted from the other versions in Mark and Luke as more or less irrelevant, and as not constituting an exception to the universal rule that a married man or woman must not marry again in the lifetime of an existing partner. We may admit with Father Joyce, that the text in St. Matthew is difficult, and to a certain extent obscure, and we can accept his suggestion that "St. Matthew has given us an abbreviated account of the conversation. It may be supposed that Our Lord set forth in separate statements, perhaps in answer to separate questions, the indissolubility of marriage and the right to dismiss an unfaithful partner, and that the obscurity is due to the evangelist having compressed these into a single statement."¹ But in any case, we can urge, with Mgr. Dean in his footnote to the Westminster Version of Matthew xix, that "the clause 'except for impurity' evidently warrants no more than a separation of the parties, without dissolution of the marriage-bond; otherwise Christ straightway cancels His own appeal to the original institution by God (xix, 4-6), sanctions once more a permission He has just discountenanced (xix, 8), contradicts His own previous teaching (v, 31-32), and is found misinterpreted by His own apostles, who were present, and who afterwards questioned Him on the same point." Mgr. Dean here gives references to the passages in Mark and Luke, and also to I Corinthians vii, 10-11. This last passage may be quoted now in confirmation of Our Lord's words:

"To the married I give this charge—nay, not I, but the Lord—that a wife depart not from her husband (but if she have departed, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband), and that a husband put not away his wife."

Here we have indeed an exceptional separation envisaged, but the apostle makes it perfectly plain that such separation must not result in remarriage.

The Catholic Church concludes from this Scriptural evidence that Christ our Lord abolished divorce properly so called, i.e., divorce with the right of remarriage, and restored matrimony to its original indissolubility. "Whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder."

The exclusion of the right of remarriage likewise carries with it the exclusion of polygamy, which had been allowed in the Old Law.

¹ Cf. *Six Sacraments* (Cambridge Summer School Lectures for 1929), p. 237 n.

Thus, we have a restoration of the two great and original characteristics of the contract of matrimony, namely, its unity, and its indissolubility. The Code of Canon Law states (Canon 1013) that “the essential properties of matrimony are its unity and indissolubility, which in Christian marriage have a special firmness because of its sacramental character.” As to polygamy, the Catholic position was defined once and for all at the Council of Trent: “If anyone shall say that it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time, and that this is not forbidden by any divine law, let him be anathema.”¹ This Canon applies especially to Christian marriage. But the Council also expressly teaches that Our Lord restored generally to all marriages their original unity and indissolubility:

“The first parent of the human race, under the influence of the divine Spirit, pronounced the bond of matrimony perpetual and indissoluble when he said, ‘This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh.’ But, that by this bond two only are united and joined together. Our Lord taught more plainly when, repeating those last words, as having been uttered by God, He said: ‘therefore now they are not two, but one flesh’; and straightway confirmed the firmness of that bond, proclaimed so long ago by Adam, in these words: ‘What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.’ ” (Session xxiv).

This definition of the Council of Trent put an end to any hesitations or doubts which had arisen as to the absolute unity of Christian marriage. Some hesitation had been shown, even by the Holy See, just prior to the Council, in connection with a request made by Henry VIII that he should be allowed to have two wives. The details of this incident are given in a later chapter.

The next point in Evangelical teaching to which we must call attention is Our Lord’s insistence upon the possibility of sins of thought, as distinct from evil acts. It is highly significant that the classical text in this connection is one which refers particularly to sexual thoughts. It is found in the Sermon on the Mount, and it immediately precedes the condemnation of divorce:

“Ye have heard that it was said: ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that everyone that looketh upon a woman so as to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart” {Matt, v, 27-28}.

There is at least one other text which should, however, be quoted in this connection, and it occurs in the fifteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. Here Our Lord explains that "from the heart come forth wicked purposes—murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Here the reference is primarily to sins of action, but they are expressly said to originate in the heart, i.e., they are first sins of thought before they become sins of action. Significantly enough, two of the examples here given are adulteries and fornications.

Theologians have carefully studied and developed the notion of sins of thought. Thus, as Vermeersch points out,¹ we can distinguish between pleasure or complacency in a present thing or action, the desire of such a thing or action in the future, and thirdly the joyful recollection of a thing or action in time past. Such thoughts may be innocuous, or they may be harmful and sinful. What is the criterion by which they must be judged?

In the first place, for a thought or desire to be sinful, its subject-matter must itself be sinful* For, as St. Thomas Aquinas explains in his *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, q. 34, art. 1, the desires of good operations are themselves good, and the desires of evil operations are themselves evil, and further, the pleasure experienced in good actions is itself good, and that experienced in evil actions is itself bad.²

This important principle, i.e., that thoughts and desires share in the moral character of their subject-matter or acts, is not always set forth in popular books with all the clarity that could be desired, especially where matters of sex are concerned. Yet the principle has some very important applications precisely in these matters. Thus, inasmuch as marriage is a good and holy state, and the marriage act is likewise good and lawful in those who are married, it is certainly not in itself wrong for those who are as yet unmarried, but are free to marry, to desire to be married, or again, for those who are married already to desire the exercise of the marriage act. To think of, or to desire something which is in itself good and lawful is itself good and lawful.

There is, however, another consideration which affects the whole

¹ *Theologia Morale's*, I, p. 412.

² "In moralibus, est quaedam delectatio bona, secundum quod appetitus superior aut inferior requiescit in eo quod convenit rationi; et quaedam mala ex eo quod quiescit in eo quod a ratione discordat, et a lege Dei. Alio ratio accipi potest ex parte operationum, quarum quaedam sunt malae, et quaedam bonae. Operationibus autem magis sunt affinae delectationes quae sunt eis conjunctae quam concupiscentiae quae tempore eas praecedunt. Unde, cum concupiscentiae bonarum operationum sint bonae, malarum vero malae, multo magis delectationes quae sunt eis conjunctae, quam concupiscentiae quae tempore eas praecedunt. Unde cum concupiscentiae bonarum operationum sunt bonae, malarum vero malae, multo magis delectationes bonarum operationum sunt bonae, malarum vero malae." {*Summa Theologica*, Ia Dae, q. 34, art. 1}.

question of the sinfulness of thoughts. It is that, in our fallen state our sense appetites are so difficult to control, that the mere thought or pleasurable contemplation of legitimate sexual acts, either in the past or future, will often induce a strong physical disturbance and concomitant sensual desire for sexual relief here and now, whether such an act be here and now lawful or not, and even though it be recognised to be unlawful. Such a desire of something here and now unlawful is obviously itself sinful, and inasmuch as it may have been induced by the thought of a thing in itself lawful, i.e., a past or future act which was or will be lawful in itself, clearly thoughts even of lawful things may become dangerous, if not positively sinful, precisely because of the consequences they involve in us here and now. If, on the other hand, no such unpleasant and undesirable consequences are involved, then there is no danger and no sin in such thoughts or desires of lawful things. Here is an application of this principle, set forth by Tanqueray: "The pleasurable thought of sexual union with one's wife, in the past or in the future, or its desire, excluding any proximate risk of pollution occurring, is not a sin, for it is pleasure or desire of something which is lawful.¹ But this theologian adds that, if the husband is at the time in question absent from his wife, such a thought might well be dangerous, precisely because it might involve the risk of pollution.²

Other applications of these principles can easily be made by the reader himself. Here is a very apposite quotation from Father Martindale's book, *The Difficult Commandment*.

"I probably cannot help having a certain number of thoughts about sexual things. Do not go and say at once that these are 'bad' thoughts. Thinking about the subject of sex can be quite legitimate. You are doing so now. It depends on what you do with your thoughts, and why" (p. 21).

Here is another quotation, from the same book:

"An inclination towards the opposite sex is normal and right. . . . Never confuse yourself by thinking that somehow, if you were all you should be, you would be, as it were, body-less, or that your sex-instinct is a wicked thing, or that you are expected to trample it out, or that sex actions ought necessarily to disgust

¹ "Delectatio venerea de copula cum proprio conjuge habita vel habenda, ejusve desiderium, excluso tamen proximo periculo pollutionis, non est peccatum, quia est gaudium vel desiderium de re licita." *Supplementum De Matrimonio*, p. 19.

² "Si alter conjux est absens, vivida hujusmodi cogitatio valde periculosa est, cum ex una parte inducat periculum pollutionis, et ex altera hoc periculum per copulam maritalem averti nequeat."

you, or that women are a regrettable necessity, or inferior to man, or that you ought not to be attracted by them” (ibid., pp. 16-17).

Similarly, a “Catholic Woman Doctor” writes thus in a chapter on “Men Friends” in her book for girls, *Growing Up*:

“Sex attraction, as it is called, is a natural healthy desire, and has been created by Almighty God, for without it few men and women would desire to marry and have children” (p. 32).

There is a third important point which must be remembered: Subjectively, moral merit and guilt depend upon the action of the will. Hence the mere presence in the mind of the thought of a sinful action, or the desire of it does not constitute a sin, from the subjective point of view (as distinct from the objective), unless and until it is realised to be sinful or dangerous, and yet the will consents to its presence, or takes pleasure in it. From the objective standpoint, however, the thought or desire of something bad remains a sin, even though inadvertance may excuse from moral guilt.

To sum up: the thought and/or desire of something good and lawful is in itself good and lawful. But it may be dangerous, and lead on to desires which are not good and lawful. This is especially the case with sexual thoughts, and so the greatest care should be taken in their case. The thought and desire of something evil is of course sinful.

From all this it follows that not all sexual thoughts or desires are necessarily evil, though they may often be dangerous. Hence it is difficult to approve of the widespread notion that all such thoughts and desires should be mentioned in confession, as “bad thoughts”. People should rather be instructed to distinguish between thoughts of lawful things, and thoughts of unlawful things, and confess “unlawful sexual thoughts or desires”.

Very often people are instructed to confess all such thoughts and desires as “thoughts against holy purity”. This is open to the same objection. Further, it must be emphasised that there is, in reality, no such virtue, as distinct from the virtue of chastity, or the related one of modesty. Purity is often called the “angelic virtue”, because, as one writer puts it, “it renders man like to the angels”.¹ This is sufficient in itself to show that the usual connotation of the word is such that it implies contempt for and abstinence from any material pleasure, and particularly from such material things as sex. But one will search in vain in the *Summa* of St. Thomas for this particular virtue. What does exist is the virtue of chastity, and this, as we have

¹ Student's Catholic Doctrine, by Rev. C. Hart, p. 221.

seen, does not exclude all exercise of sex, but allows only that which is in accordance with right reason, i.e., in the married state. "Purity" is a general attitude of mind, rather than a "virtue", and in any case, it must or should be brought into line with the Church's general teaching on the lawfulness and sanctity of sex, in its proper place. For this reason the present writer would suggest that, instead of being instructed or encouraged to confess to "thoughts and/or actions against holy purity", people should be instructed to confess to "sins of thought and/or action against the chastity due to their state in life".

Any account of Our Lord's attitude towards sex and marriage would be incomplete if it did not mention his presence at the marriage at Cana in Galilee, at the beginning of the Public Ministry, and his gracious miracle wrought there in order to relieve the embarrassment of the bridegroom. Thus the Son of God, who came to teach the Gospel of Renunciation and the Way of the Cross, did not hesitate to approve the sacred institution of marriage and thus confirm the doctrine enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount.

Again, we must mention Christ's treatment of the woman taken in adultery. Though so stern in the matter of sin itself, Jesus was full of tenderness towards the sinner. Again, we have the same tenderness displayed towards Mary Magdalen, the woman who was a "sinner in the city". Consider Our Lord's statements: "Go, and sin no more." "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." Such is the compassion which the Son of God has for our poor, weak human nature!

Consideration should also be given to Our Lord's words concerning motherhood and childbirth, recorded in an earlier chapter,¹ and his attitude in general towards women and children.

We must now turn to another important feature in Our Lord's teaching, namely, his praise of celibacy undertaken for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is found in the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. Jesus had just abolished divorce, and restored the original indissolubility of marriage. No man may marry another wife, even though his own has committed fornication. The utmost he may do is to "put her away". St. Matthew's account continues as follows:

"The disciples say to him: 'If such be the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' And he said to them: 'Not all take in this saying, but they to whom it hath been given. For there are

¹ See Part One, pp. 34-35.

eunuchs who were born so from their mother's womb, and eunuchs who were made such by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves such for the sake of the Kingdom of the Heavens. He that can take this in, let him take it in.' "

The plain meaning here is that Our Lord agrees that it is "better not to marry", but adds that this better way is not for all, but only for those "to whom it hath been given". Some are incapable of marriage because they are impotent, either through birth or through the act of man. Others there are who equivalently "make themselves eunuchs" by abstaining from marriage "for the sake of the Kingdom of the Heavens". Let him who can take this "better way", i.e., him to whom it is given, "take it".

Here we must note that Our Lord's teaching is not praise of celibacy or virginity as such, but celibacy and virginity undertaken for God's sake, by those to whom it is given. Thus, true Christian Asceticism is not in any way motivated by love of comfort, or considerations of self, but rather by the love of God.

In any case, the true Christian ideal of virginity includes a real though spiritual marriage and parenthood. This point is so important that we must deal with it more in detail.

First, we have the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, as we have seen, was truly and perfectly a virgin throughout her life, was nevertheless really and truly married to St. Joseph. Also, she was really and truly a mother—Mother of God the Son. She was also Mother of those other "adopted sons." of God, "who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". Her Motherhood of all Christians is exemplified by her motherhood of St. John at the foot of the Cross: "Woman, behold thy Son"; "Son, behold thy Mother." "And from that moment, the disciple took her to his own." Thus did Our Blessed Lady, Virgin of Virgins, fulfil the divine function of all women, that of motherhood. She was not only Virgin of Virgins, but, if we may say so. Mother of Mothers. There is much that might be said of what Abbot Vonier paradoxically calls "the virginity of motherhood in Mary".¹ It is a subject which admits certainly of development. Abbot Vonier himself seems to suggest such a development when he writes that "Mary's virginity as the Mother of God ... is a virginity of a higher kind, a virginity that is truly a divine mystery. It is a super-eminent virginity ... Mary's motherhood is Mary's virginity, and Mary is the Virgin of virgins in virtue of her divine Motherhood. ... To say that Mary remained virgin in spite of her being Mother would not be an adequate rendering of her unique privilege.

¹ Divine Motherhood, p. 27.

If we say merely that Mary's virginity was safeguarded in the higher grace of her motherhood, we admit, indeed, a marvellous thing, a miraculous operation on the part of God, but we seem to imply that the divine motherhood might have been a danger to the virginity, which danger was averted by a miraculous interposition. . . . But surely there is more in Mary's virginity. She is the virgin she is, not in spite of her motherhood, but because of her motherhood."¹

This profound truth will perhaps be better understood if it is considered in the light of the teaching concerning Unfallen Man which we have outlined previously.² Then we saw that physical virginity in motherhood would, in the opinion of great Doctors and theologians, have been the rule, not the exception. We have also seen that, in the opinion of the same doctors, in the state of innocence, pure or absolute virginity as such would not have been laudable, i.e., a virginity which would exclude motherhood. We have also urged that our own aim, in the state of Redeemed Humanity, should be to restore the state of Unfallen Man, so far as this may be possible. Now, that all Christians, including those who embrace the higher state of virginity, are to be spiritually parents, is shown by Our Lord's statement that all those who hear Him are his Mother and his brethren. Thus, we read in Mark iii:

"There was a multitude sitting about him, and they say to him: 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without are seeking thee.' And answering, he saith to them: 'Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?' And looking around about him, he saith: 'Behold, my mother and my brethren! Whosoever doth the will of God, he is brother and sister and mother to me.' " (w. 31-35).

Here is St. Luke's version:

"They told him: 'Thy mother and thy brethren are standing without, wishing to see thee.' But he answered and said unto them: 'My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God and do it.' " (viii, 21).

If it seems difficult to understand how this spiritual parenthood can belong to all Christians, we commend the following explanation given by St. Gregory the Great in his Homily read in the Third Nocturn for the Feast of the Seven Holy Brothers (July 10th):

"If he who comes to the Faith can become the brother of the Lord, we must inquire how he may also be his mother. We must

¹ Divine Motherhood, pp. 27-28.

² See Chapter Three.

understand that, whereas he who believes becomes the sister and brother of Christ, he who preaches Him becomes his mother. For the latter, so to speak, gives birth to the Lord, whom he imparts to the soul of his hearer; and he becomes his mother by the act of preaching if, through his words, the love of the Lord is brought to life in the mind of his neighbour.”

A striking commentary on this is also provided by the fact that St. Paul uses precisely this simile in his Epistle to the Galatians’.

“My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you!” (iv, 19).

Further applications of this great truth are to be found in the fact that the title “Father” is given to the Pope and to bishops, and is also common amongst the clergy and religious orders, while “Mother” is in common use in orders of nuns. Thus is the family spirit and the ideal of spiritual parenthood kept alive, even amongst those vowed to virginity.

The doctrine just enunciated has received a striking confirmation recently in an Address given to Catholic Women’s Associations by Pope Pius XII, on Women’s Duties in Social and Political Life. His Holiness says:

“Be she married or single, woman’s function is seen clearly defined in the lineaments of her sex, in its propensities and special powers. . . . Now, a woman’s function, a woman’s way, a woman’s natural bent, is motherhood. Every woman is called to be a mother, mother in the physical sense, or mother in a sense more spiritual and more exalted yet real none the less. To this end the Creator has fashioned the whole of woman’s nature; not only her organism, but also and still more her spirit, and most of all her exquisite sensibility.”¹

Again, as St. Augustine points out in the homily read in the third nocturn on the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, “not even those who have vowed their virginity to God, and are thus in a higher degree of honour and sanctity in the Church, are without marriage, for they have a part in the marriage of the whole Church, of which Christ Himself is the bridegroom.”

From all this it follows that mere physical virginity as such is of little value without that spiritual virginity which is accompanied by spiritual parenthood. This is expressly noted by St. Gregory the

¹ C.T.S. edn., p. 8 (italics outs).

Great in a homily used for the third nocturn of the office of Confessors who are not Pontiffs:

“Two things are commanded: to gird the loins, and to hold lamps, so that in our bodies may be found the purity of chastity, and in our works the light of truth. For our Redeemer can by no means be pleased with one without the other; either if a man doing good deeds outwardly still persists in the impurity of wanton excesses, or if, though of irreproachable chastity, he does not apply himself to good works. For neither is chastity of much importance if it be not joined with good works, nor are good works anything unless united to chastity. ...”

Thus does the Church carry on the teaching of the Gospels, and emphasise the doctrine that true Christian virginity is of necessity one which is fruitful. Neither the Gospels nor the Church praise the celibate life as such. True, the Council of Trent defined in its 24th Session that “the married state is not to be preferred to the state of virginity or celibacy”, and also that “it is better and happier to remain in virginity or celibacy than to be joined in matrimony”. But, as Father Martindale has pointed out, “This Canon, like anything that relates to the Christian life, has to be understood ‘in Christ’ . . . Mere non-marriage in itself is obviously not better than marriage. The selfish old bachelor, the soured spinster, are not because of their unmarriedness loftier in the ethical scale than the married. The honourable father or mother of a family is indeed much nobler than they. . . . But the matter passes into a different world when a man or woman resolves to renounce marriage for the sake of Our Lord and of his Faith and of his Church. . . . Forthwith celibacy or virginity becomes fruitful.”¹

Moreover, as St. Thomas Aquinas points out, “although virginity is better than conjugal continence, it may happen nevertheless that a married person is better than a virgin, and this in two ways: first from the standpoint of chastity itself, for a married man might be more prepared in mind to observe virginity if necessary than one who is actually in the virgin state. Hence Augustine, in his book *De hono conjugali*, instructs one who is a virgin to say: ‘I am not better than Abraham, but celibate chastity is better than the chastity of marriage.’ And he later on gives the reason for this, saying: ‘For

¹ Wedlock, pp. 45-47- That this is in fact the common doctrine is shown by the following statement in the article on the Counsels of Perfection in the Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, p.436: “Abstinence from unlawful indulgence . . . is forbidden to all Christians as a matter of precept. The further voluntary abstinence from what is in itself lawful is the subject of the counsels, and such abstinence is not in itself meritorious but only becomes so when it is done for the sake of Christ, and in order to be more free to serve Him” (italics ours).

what I do now, he would have done better, if it was then the thing to do; but what they did I would not do, even if it were now the thing to do.' The second reason why a married person may be superior to one who is a virgin is that it may happen that he who is not a virgin may have some more excellent virtue. Hence Augustine says: 'How does one who is a virgin know that, although she is solicitous for the things of the Lord, perchance because of some mental infirmity unknown to her she may not be ready for martyrdom, while the woman over whom she has been claiming superiority may be already able to drink the chalice of the Lord's Passion'?"¹

Again, in the next article of the same question, St. Thomas insists that, while virginity is the most excellent in its own category, i.e., as a form of chastity, inasmuch as it transcends the chastity of widowhood and marriage, virginity is not the most excellent virtue of all. For always the end excels that which is for the end, and the more efficaciously a thing is ordered to the end, the better it is. Now, the end which makes virginity praiseworthy is the devoting of oneself to divine things. Accordingly, the theological virtues, and also the virtue of religion, the act of which is precisely this occupation with divine things, are superior to virginity. Similarly, there is a more vehement striving to inhere in God in martyrs, who to this end subordinate their whole lives, and in those living in monasteries who for this end give up their own wills and all that they might possess, than mere virgins, who for this end give up venereal pleasure. And accordingly, virginity is not simply the greatest of virtues."²

All this must be taken into due consideration when we wish to

¹ Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 152, art. 4, ad. 2: "Licet virginitas sit melior quam continentia conjugalis, potest tamen conjugatus melior esse quam virgo, duplici ratione: primo quidem ex parte ipsius castitatis, si scilicet ille qui est conjugatus habeat animum magis paratum ad virginitatem servandum, si oporteret, quam ille qui est actu virgo. Unde Augustinus instruit virginem in libro De bono conjugali, ut dicat: 'Ego non sum melior quam Abraham, sed melior est castitas caelibum quam castitas nuptiarum.' Et rationem postea subdit, dicens: 'Quod enim nunc ago, melius ille egisset, si tunc agendum esset; quod autem illi egerunt, sic ego non agerem etiam si nunc agendum esset.' Secundo, quia forte ille qui non est virgo, habet aliquam excellentiorem virtutem. Unde Augustinus dicit: 'Unde scit virgo, quamvis sollicita quae sunt Domini, ne forte propter aliquam sibi incognitam mentis infirmitatem nondum sit matura martyrio; illa vero mulier cui se praeferre gestiebat, jam possit bibere calicem Dominicae passionis?'"

² Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 152, art. 5: "Virginitas est excellentissima . . . in genere castitatis; transcendit enim et castitatem vidualem et conjugalem. . . . Alio modo potest dici aliquid excellentissimum simpliciter, et sic virginitas non est excellentissima virtutum. Semper enim finis excellit id quod est ad finem; et quanto aliquid efficacius ordinatur ad finem, tanto melius est. Finis autem ex quo virginitas laudabilis redditur est vacare rebus divinis. . . . Unde ipsae virtutes theologicae, et etiam virtus religionis, quarum actus est ipsa occupatio circa res divinas, praeferuntur virginitati. Similiter etiam vehementius operantur ad hoc quod inhaereant Deo martyres, qui ad hoc postponunt propriam vitam, et viventes in monasteriis, qui ad hoc postponunt propriam voluntatem et omnia quae possunt habere, quam virgines, quae ad hoc postponunt veneream voluntatem. Et ideo virginitas non simpliciter est maxima virtutum."

ascertain the exact way in which the state of virginity is in itself superior to the state of marriage. Further, if, as we have seen, virginity would not have been laudable in the state of innocence, it surely follows that virginity is better than marriage only in the present state of fallen man, and not in every conceivable state.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTLES ON SEX, ETC.

HAVING considered the teaching of Our Lord, we must pass on to study that of His Apostles. As we should expect, this carries on and develops that of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Gospels. Here are some points which are clear:

First, we cannot help noticing the very strong and constant condemnation of fornication and all sexual vice.¹ This is to be avoided because the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.² The general attitude of the Apostles towards sexual sins is that set forth by St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians'.

“You know what precepts we gave you by (authority of) the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you keep yourselves from fornication; that each of you know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in a passion of lust like the Gentiles who know not God, that none transgress and overreach his brother in the matter, because the Lord is an avenger of all these things, as we have told you plainly and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification”.³

Secondly, we must call attention to the emphatic assertion of the lawfulness and honourable character of marriage. Thus, we read in Hebrews xiii, 4: “Let marriage be in honour with all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.” This implies at least that marriage is in itself an honourable state, and that the marriage act of itself does not involve defilement.⁴

St. Paul's mind is made even clearer in the First Epistle to Timothy. Here he warns his readers that “in after times, some will fall away from the Faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and the teachings of

¹ The constant warning against fornication, etc., is explained by the exceedingly corrupt moral state of the pagan world at that time. Cf. Ch. Sixteen.

² See especially I Corinthians iii, 16-17, v^o 19; II Corinthians vi, 16. On fornication, see I Corinthians vi, 13, vi, 18, vii, 2; Ephesians v, 3; Colossians iii, 5, I Thessalonians iv, 3, etc. 3iv, 3-7.

⁴ The Greek has no verbs in the first part, which could accordingly be translated: “marriage (is) honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.” The text is usually understood in this precise sense by the Greek and Latin Fathers. See quotations in later chapters.

demons, through the impostures of those who speak falsely, men seared in their own conscience, forbidding marriage, and also the use of foods created by God to be thankfully received by those who believe and have the knowledge of the truth.” The Apostle adds that “everything God hath created is good, and nothing is to be rejected, so it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer.” These words refer primarily to the use of food. But the Apostle probably has also in mind the institution of marriage, which is itself a divine ordinance.

But the classical passage in St. Paul is that found in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the Apostle sets forth the mutual duties of husband and wife:

“Wives, be subject to your husband as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ too is head of the Church, himself being the saviour of the body. Well, then, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also should wives be subject to their husbands, in everything.

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself up for her sake, that he might sanctify her, purifying her in the bath of water by means of the word, and that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.”¹

*

We must note here that St. Paul is referring to the custom whereby the bride was bathed and anointed to render her the more pleasing to her husband. St. Paul does not hesitate to adopt this as a figure of baptism, which is the cleansing and adorning of the Church as the bride of Christ. The Apostle continues:

“Even thus ought husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself. Surely no man ever hated his own flesh, nay, he doth nourish and cherish it, even as Christ the Church; because we are members of his body. ‘For this shall man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall come to be in one flesh.’ The mystery here is great—I mean in reference to Christ and to the Church. However, let each of you, also, love his wife even as himself; and let the wife reverence her husband.”²

This passage is full of the most important teaching. We notice in the first place that the Apostle, so full on other occasions of exhorta-

¹ v, 22-27.

² v, 28-33.

tions to mortification and asceticism, here sets aside any idea of hatred of the body. "No man ever hated his own flesh." The wife is part of the flesh of the husband, and accordingly the husband must love his wife, for in doing so he is loving part of himself. This is true also of Christ and the Church, for the Church is the Spouse of Christ, and therefore 'part of Him, and the object of his love.

The union of the sexes in marriage, then, is a symbol of the union between Christ and the Church. Note that it is not merely the spiritual union of the spouses which is here referred to: it is indeed the physical union which is brought about by the exercise of the marriage act, for it is precisely this act which makes the two to be "in one flesh". And it is precisely this physical union of the sexes in the marriage act that is the symbol of the union between Christ and the Church.

We shall discuss in a later chapter the relevancy of this passage in the establishing of the sacramental character of Christian marriage.

There is another important passage, in which St. Paul explains not only the lawfulness, but also the obligation of the performance of the marriage act, as part of the "debt" or "due" which each partner owes to the other. This passage comes in the seventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians:

"For fear of impurity, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife her due, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife hath not control of her own body in this matter, but the husband; the husband likewise hath not control of his own body, but the wife. Deprive not one another (of your due), unless it be by consent for a time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and then be together again, lest Satan use your lack of self-control to tempt you" (2-5).

St. Paul, then, fully accepts all the implications of the teaching of Our Lord on the sanctity of marriage. In another set of passages, he adopts and develops the teaching of Our Lord on the superiority of the state of virginity. This forms the subject of the whole of chapter seven in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The Christians at Corinth had asked some questions on this matter, and St. Paul replies to them:

"Now, concerning the matters whereof you wrote: it is good for a man not to touch woman. Yet, for fear of impurity, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband."

The Apostle then goes on to explain the obligation of rendering the marriage due, in words already quoted. By consent, the parties may abstain from sexual intercourse for a time, in order to give themselves to prayer, but they should afterwards come together again, lest Satan should use their lack of control to tempt them.

Then St. Paul adds:

“This I say by way of concession, not by way of command. I wish all men to be as myself; nevertheless, each hath his own gift from God, one in this way, and one in that.”

In other words, virginity, or abstinence from the marriage act, is in itself preferable, if undertaken for religious motives, and if the power to observe this rule is given by God. But each has his own gift. This shows that it is quite wrong to infer, as did Tertullian, and even St. Jerome, that because “it is good for man not to touch woman”, it is therefore morally bad for a man to have sexual intercourse, even with his wife. There is absolutely no foundation in Scripture for this dreadful idea, which has rightly been called “sexual pessimism”.¹

St. Paul makes his mind perfectly clear in the continuation of the passage we have quoted:

“To the unmarried and to widows, I say, it is good for them to remain even as I. But if they have not self-control, let them marry: it is better to marry than to be on fire (with passion). To the married I give this charge—nay, not I, but the Lord—that a wife depart not from her husband . . . and that a husband put not away his wife. . . .

“Only, as the Lord hath allotted to each, as God hath called each, so let him walk: such is my ruling in all the churches....”

This passage is followed by a section in which St. Paul deals more at length with the state of virginity. He says he has no “commandment of the Lord” on the subject, but speaks his own mind:

“I think, therefore, that this is good, on account of the present distress—that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou not bound? Seek not a wife. But if thou marry, thou hast not sinned, and if a virgin

¹ P. Nicolas, O.P., in *Revue Thomiste*, 1939, p. 782. He speaks of a “pessimisme sexual qui se rattache, non pas seulement à St. Augustin, comme on le dit souvent, mais à une longue tradition patristique et ascétique”. St. Jerome’s words are: “Si bonum est mulierem non tangere, malum est ergo tangere” (*Adv. Jovin.*, I, 7). A similar statement had been made by Tertullian in *De monogamia*.

We return to this matter in a later chapter.

marry, she hath not sinned. Yet such (as marry) shall have affliction in the flesh; but I spare you. But this I say, brethren: the time is short; henceforth, let those that have wives be as having them not, and those that weep as weeping not. . . and those that use the world as not using it to the full. For the world as we see it is passing away.”

So far, the Apostle has said that, while all are perfectly free to marry if they wish, and can do so without sin, it is better for those unmarried to remain in the single state, and for those who use the world not to use it to the full, “on account of the present distress”, and because “the world as we see it is passing away”. Difficulties would arise were we to interpret this to indicate a prevalent expectation of a speedy Second Coming, for according to the Catholic doctrine of Inspiration, the Holy Ghost teaches and suggests whatever the sacred author teaches and suggests. It is better to say that the language may merely have reference to the temporal distress and general insecurity then affecting all human life. In any case, it would be a serious error to suggest, as non-Catholics often do, that the Apostle’s preference for virginity is based upon a mistaken idea, held even by himself, that the end of the world was at hand, to the exclusion of any other considerations. For St. Paul goes on to give motives which are valid for all time, and which are obviously religious in character:

“My desire is to have you free from care. He that is unmarried, hath a care for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married hath a care for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is drawn different ways. So also the unmarried woman and the virgin hath a care for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and soul, whilst the married woman hath a care for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”

The footnote in the Westminster Version here is very much to the point:

“St. Paul does not mean that celibacy is necessarily holiness, or married life necessarily worldliness, but he points out the opportunities of the one, and the dangers of the other.”

The Apostle concludes in these words:

“This I say for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare

upon you, but for the sake of seemly and devoted and undistracted service of the Lord.”

He once more makes his mind perfectly clear in a statement concerning widows, at the end of the same chapter:

“A wife is bound to her husband so long as he liveth, but if her husband pass to his rest, she is free to marry whom she will, only (let it be) in the Lord. But she is more blessed if she remain as she is, in my judgment, and methinks I too have the spirit of God.”

In other words, virginity and widowhood are preferable, if chosen for God’s sake.

In the later First Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul explains, doubtless in the light of experience, that, if widows are to be accepted for the whole-time service of the Church, they should not be less than sixty years of age, and should have married but once. Younger widows are more likely to change their minds, and wish to marry, and incur the guilt of breaking their first troth:

“I desire therefore that younger widows marry, bear children, govern households. . . .”

From this we gather that widows devoted to the service of the Church made some kind of solemn promise to remain single, and that their state was regarded as in itself higher. For “she that is truly a widow and forlorn, hath her hope set on God, and doth continue in her supplications and prayers night and day” (I Timothy v).

Doubtless many of those who occupied the office of “deaconess” in the Apostolic Church were either widows or virgins. There are references to deaconesses in Romans xvi, 1-2, and I Timothy iii, 11. But there may well have been no exclusion of married women at first from this office.

There would seem to have been a similar situation in regard to the clergy. Deacons must have been married but once, “and they must rule well their children and their own households” (I Timothy, iii, 12). Similarly, “a bishop must be married but once (I Timothy iii, 2), and Titus is to “appoint priests in every city . . . men irreproachable, married but once, with children that believe. . . .” Evidently, those who were accepted for the Church’s ministry might continue in the married state if they were already married, but they were not to marry again. The preference for the single state is here very marked, but there is no general law of celibacy, though it

would be a logical development to decide at some future time to accept as candidates only those who elect to remain unmarried.

We must now say something about the teaching of St. Peter and St. John. As we should expect, the doctrine of the Prince of the Apostles in no way differs from that of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Thus, like St. Paul, St. Peter has grave words of condemnation for those] “whose eyes are full of adultery, and insatiable in sin” (II Peter, ii, 14), who “lure away by wantonness”, and “promise freedom, whereas themselves are the slaves of corruption: for by whatsoever thing a man is overcome, to that same is he made a slave” (II Peter, ii, 18-19).

St. Peter also deals with the mutual duties of husbands and wives, in language which is very reminiscent of the 'Epistle to the Ephesians:

“Wives, be subject to your husbands, so that, even if any disobey the word, they may, without any word, be won by the behaviour of their wives, by dint of watching your chaste and reverent manner of life. . . . Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with them considerately, paying reverence to the woman as to the weaker vessel, and as having a common heirship in the grace of life, so that your prayers be not hindered” (I Peter, iii, 1-7).

As to St. John's teaching, we have already had some indications of this in our study of passages from his Gospel. It is St. John who tells us about the marriage at Cana in Galilee, where Our Lord, by his presence and also by his miracle, showed his approval of the holy institution of matrimony. This is all the more significant in that St. John himself had chosen a virginal life, and was the one to whom Our Lord entrusted his own Virgin Mother after his death on the Cross.

The Apocalypse of St. John describes the mystical espousals of Christ with His Church, in glowing language. It would seem clear that St. John would not adopt this symbol for the union between Christ and the Church unless marriage itself was a holy institution. A difficulty, however, seems to be presented by St. John's reference to the “virgins who follow the Lamb”, in ch. xiv. A hundred and forty-four thousand, who have the name of the Lamb and his Father's name written on their foreheads, sing a new canticle. St. John goes on: “These are they who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. These are they who accompany the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from men, to be first fruits to God and to the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.” Here, it is urged, St. John speaks

disparagingly of sexual intercourse, even, apparently in the married state, as a “defilement”. But careful consideration will decidedly lessen the difficulty. We must note in the first place that St. John’s praise is literally confined to male celibates, though doubtless by extension it can also be applied to female virgins. The text is certainly understood of virginity by St. Augustine and St. Thomas. But these two Doctors are careful to warn us not to misunderstand the significance of St. John’s statement. The former writes thus: “The joy of Christ’s virgins is about Christ, in Christ, with Christ, after Christ, through Christ, for Christ’s sake. Others have their joys, but to none are given like these. You follow him in your virginity of mind and body, for to follow surely means to imitate. Others, who have lost bodily virginity, follow Him, not whither soever He goeth, but whither soever they can. Even the married can tread in his footsteps, and though not so closely, yet can walk in His tracks” (*De sancta virginitate*, 27-28). St. Thomas Aquinas warns us against unduly stressing the excellence even of bodily virginity: “These follow the Lamb, because they imitate Him in bodily as well as in mental integrity. Hence as a rule (*in pluribus*) they follow the Lamb, though not necessarily closer to Him. For other virtues make us by mental imitation cling more closely to God” (*Summa Theologica*, *IIa IIae*, q. clii, art. 5, ad. 3). But in point of fact, many modern commentators, including Bossuet, Calmet, Crampon, etc., hold that in this passage St. John is not really referring to physical virginity at all. Crampon, for instance, thinks that we have here “a metaphor similar to that frequently employed by the prophets of the Old Testament. The ‘women’, intercourse with whom defiles the soul, are impious doctrines and guilty pleasures, symbolised in the Apocalypse itself by Jezabel and the great Harlot. The ‘virgins’ accordingly represent here all those pure souls who together form the mystical body of the Church, the spouse of the Lamb.” (*Apocalypse*, in *Sainte Bible*, Vol. VII, pp. 480-481). Already in the early eighteenth century, Dom Calmet, O.S.B. had similarly urged that “in the style of the prophets, by fornication is meant idolatry, and virginity signifies cleanness from all sacriligious worship. These, therefore, are virgins in this sense, who have not fallen into the impurities of creature worship.” Dom Calmet then mentions the interpretation of St. Augustine, who thinks that St. John is speaking of physical virginity, but maintains that the view he has himself advocated gives “the more literal sense” of the passage. There is indeed much to be said for understanding the “defilement with women” mentioned by St. John to be the equivalent, not of matrimonial intercourse, but of fornication or some other form of sexual immorality, and this “defilement” may well have primarily a sym-

bolical signification, as maintained by the modern commentators whom we have mentioned. Alternatively, if it be insisted that the “defilement” cannot textually be understood only of sexual intercourse outside marriage, we could only say that such “defilement” would have to be understood in the sense of the Old Testament regulations mentioned in a previous chapter. We repeat once more that, if St. John really regarded the marriage act as a defilement in the moral sense, he could not possibly have used the married state as a symbol for the union between Christ and the Church.

The doctrine of the New Testament upon the sacred character of marriage, and the high religious symbolism of the marriage act, would be sufficient in themselves to exclude any idea that the organs of sex are in themselves in any way indecent. But against this it may be urged that there is a passage in the Epistles of St. Paul in which it is definitely stated that these organs are in fact indecent. The word used in the Latin version of this passage is precisely the word *inhonesta*, i.e., the term which we have deprecated when we have discussed the description of the sexual organs current among moral theologians. This matter must therefore be considered with the utmost care. First let us give the text itself. The passage is found in the twelfth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. St. Paul is here emphasising the difference in functions of the various members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Catholic Church. No one member may despise another, or think that other members, which have not the same function, are unnecessary. St. Paul extends the analogy, and points out that even the lowly members of the body, with apparently humble offices, are just as necessary, and if they are not of high esteem in themselves, we supply the honour lacking by our own treatment of them:

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of thee,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker, are still necessary, and those which we deem the less honourable in the body we surround with especial honour, and our uncomely parts receive special comeliness, whereas our comely parts have no need thereof. Yea, God hath so compounded the body as to give especial honour where it was lacking . . . that the members may have a common care for each other. If one member suffereth, all the members suffer therewith; if a member be honoured, all the members rejoice therewith” (I Corinthians xii, 21-26, Westminster Version).

The words here translated “uncomely parts” are rendered in the Vulgate by *inhonesta*, and the Greek original here has *aschemona*,—the same term as that used by the LXX to translate the Hebrew word *erwath* in Leviticus xviii, 6, where the Vulgate has *turpitudō*.¹ We saw that in the case of this Old Testament book, the Hebrew term in question does not necessarily bear any unpleasant meaning, and that in fact it is rendered in Genesis by the term *gumnosis*, meaning nakedness. Here, however, the Greek word *aschemona* is the original term used, and hence we must discuss its real significance. It must certainly be admitted that it signifies the absence of comeliness, decency or honour. What organs of the body are referred to in this way? Here we are reduced more or less to conjectures. It seems highly probable, though not absolutely certain, that the Apostle has in mind the sexual organs. And in our treatment, we will assume that this is the correct explanation.

It must, however, be noted that in the same verse, when speaking of the “weaker parts” of the body, the Apostle is careful to add the words “seem to be”. And similarly, when going on to speak of the “less honourable parts”, he prefixes this term by the words “those which we deem” to be such. In other words, he goes out of his way to make it plain that he is here speaking of the parts, not as they are in themselves, but as they are commonly regarded. True, he introduces no such words when speaking of the “uncomely parts”. Accordingly, some commentators, such as Cornelius a Lapide, have inferred that these parts, i.e., the sexual organs, are indeed uncomely or *inhonesta* in themselves, and not merely in common parlance. But it hardly seems safe to argue thus from the absence of a phrase already used in two out of the three clauses. Certainly, as we shall see, St. John Chrysostom takes it for granted that an equivalent modification is to be understood also in the case of the *aschemona* or uncomely parts. St. Augustine, on the other hand, and St. Thomas Aquinas, seem to think that the Apostle really considers the sexual organs *inhonesta*. Even so, they are most careful to make it plain in what sense the term is applied to them. But before giving their comments on this verse, we must call attention to the fact that the Apostle says that these “uncomely parts” or *inhonesta* are given “special comeliness” or “special honour” by us, to make up for what they lack in themselves (or else in common estimation). Hence, even if the sex organs are to be regarded as in themselves *inhonesta* in a certain sense, it is none the less true that they are to be given “special honour” by us, so far as lies in our power. St. Paul does not say in what this “special honour” consists, but the commentators rightly say that this must consist in the care we take of them, and the clothing we

¹ Seep. 78.

give them. Thus, according to the Apostle, the purpose of clothing our sexual organs is, not to hide them because they are immodest, but to give them the honour and comeliness which they lack—but which it is evidently desirable that they should be given. Accordingly, Cornelius a Lapide writes: “These have a more abundant honour—that is, we cover them more diligently and in a more comely manner, and clothe them. . . . Again, these members are made seemly in marriage.”¹

Let us now see how this passage has been interpreted in the authentic Catholic Tradition. We will give two examples from the Patristic period, one from the East, and one from the West. The East shall be represented by the golden-mouthed Bishop of Constantinople, St. John Chrysostom. This great Doctor of the Church deals with the matter in his Thirty-first Homily on the First Epistle to the Corinthians.² He begins by calling attention to the Apostle’s warning that he is speaking according to common estimation, and not according to the nature of things themselves:

“He (St. Paul) well says: ‘which seem’, and ‘which we regard as’, indicating that the description arises, not from the nature of the things themselves, but from the common opinion. For nothing in us is dishonourable, seeing that it is all God’s work. Thus, what in us seems to be less honourable than our genital organs? Nevertheless these enjoy great honour. And the very poor, even if they leave the rest of the body naked, cannot bear to exhibit these members naked. Yet surely, this is not the way to treat things which are dishonourable, for such things should be despised more than other things. . . . If this member (the sexual organ) were dishonourable, instead of having greater privileges it ought not even to enjoy the same as others, whereas now it hath greater honour for its portion. And this has been brought about by the Wisdom of God. For to some parts He hath given by their nature not to need our honour, and to others, not granted this by their nature. He hath compelled us to give honour. Even so, these parts are not therefore dishonourable. . . . Yea rather, if we consider the matter accurately, the parts in question are even by nature itself both honourable and necessary. And this in truth Paul himself indicates when he gives his own judgment of them, not from our care of them or their enjoying greater honour, but from the very nature of these things themselves. Thus, when he calls them ‘weak’ and ‘less honourable’, he uses the expression ‘which seem’, but when he calls them ‘necessary’, he no longer

¹ On I Corinthians xii, 23.

² Migne, P.G., Vol. 61, cols. 257-8.

adds 'which seem', but himself gives his judgment, saying 'they are necessary'. And he is right, for these parts are useful for the procreation of children and the continuation of our race. . . .

"But woe to the intemperate, who bring reproach upon the handiworks of God! For, as many are accustomed to curse wine on account of the drunken, and womankind on account of the unchaste, so also they consider these organs base, by reason of those who use them not as they ought. But that is not right. For sin is not allotted to the thing itself as a part of its nature, but the transgression emanates from the human will."¹

Thus, so far from agreeing that the sexual organs are in themselves base, or lacking in honour, St. John Chrysostom insists that they still retain the honour and dignity due to them as God's handiwork, and that any dishonourable character in them is only external and accidental, and is found in them only because of their misuse through human sin. It is a pleasure to find this true Catholic sentiment echoed in the *Threefold Exposition of St. Paul's Epistles* by Bernard a Piconio. For he comments thus:

"Rightly does St. Paul say 'which seem', 'which we regard as'... For nothing in us is ignoble or dishonest, for it is the work of God."²

We now turn to St. Augustine. His view is not quite the same as that of St. John Chrysostom. For, as we shall see, he holds the view that the sex organs are now *inhonesta* in themselves. But he is careful to explain that this is only because of sin, and that, as created by God, the sex organs were in no way shameful.

St. Augustine's explanation of the way in which the sex organs are *inhonesta* varied in different works. The late Cardinal MacRory, indeed, asserts that St. Augustine "at first understood *aschemona* in the sense of 'uncomely', but afterwards he preferred to render it '*inhonesta*'."³ But the truth is that St. Augustine throughout defended the word '*inhonesta*'. Cardinal MacRory refers here to St. Augustine's *Ketractationes*, II7. But this is what the Doctor of Hippo really says in this place:

"In my *Contra Eustum Manichaeum*, lib. 29,1 wrote: 'Let it not be thought that there is in the members of holy persons—even in their genital organs—any turpitude. They are certainly called

¹ The above translation is based on that given in the Oxford edition of St. John Chrysostom's *Commentaries*, but it has been revised by the present writer.

² *Commentary on I Corinthians*, xii, 23.

³ *Commentary on I Corinthians*, p. 191.

'inhonesta', but that is because they have not that beautiful appearance possessed by members which are in full view.' But in other works written later, explaining why the apostle says that these organs are 'inhonesta', I have said, with more probability, that it is because of the law in our members fighting against the law of the mind—a state of things which results from sin, and did not belong to the first institution of our human nature."¹

We note here that St. Augustine does not altogether repudiate his former explanation of 'inhonesta', but he thinks his later explanation the more probable one.

Here are some other passages in which St. Augustine made his view quite plain, and which he never modified:

"That these members were at first honesta cannot be questioned without blasphemy.... Yet the Apostle calls them 'inhonesta'.... Thus, what God had made honesta, the Apostle calls inhonesta. I ask the reason for this. If it is not the effect of sin, what can be its cause?"²

"It is the unlawful use, the use of these members in a way which is not subject to the laws of temperance, that is filthy, not the members themselves. For not only have these very members been kept in excellent integrity by celibates and virgins, but also holy married people, fathers and mothers, have used them solely for the sake of generation, so that this natural exercise of them was in no way filthy, because it was subjected, not to lust but to reason. How much more, therefore, must we say that in the Blessed Virgin Mary, who conceived the flesh of Christ in faith, there was no turpitude in the organs which served, not even for human and lawful conception, but only for the divine childbearing?"³

¹ "Contra Faustum Manichaeum, lib 29, De filio Noe, secundo. 'Absit,' inquam, 'ut sit in membris sanctorum etiam genitalibus aliqua turpitudine, dicuntur quidem inhonesta quia non habent earn speciem decoris quam membra quae in promptu locata sunt.' Sed probabilior in aliis postea scriptis nostris, reddita ratio est cur ea dixerit etiam apostolus inhonesta, propter legem scilicet in membris repugnantem legi mentis, quae de peccato accidit, non de prima nostrae institutione naturae." E. extractions, Lib. 13, cap. 32.

² "Quod ilia membra fuisse prius honesta, non aliud posses nisi blasphema opinione sentire. . . . 'Inhonesta' dixit Apostulus. . . . Quae igitur Deus honesta fecerat, dixit Apostolus 'inhonesta'. Causam requiro: si hoc non peccato factum est, unde factum est?" Contra Julianum, IV, 80-81, Migne, P.L., Vol. 44, col. 779-780.

³ "Inlicitus itaque et temperantiae legibus non subjectus membrorum illorum usus est turpis, non ipsa membra, quae non solum in excellenti integritate coelibes et virgines servant, sed ipsi conjugati sancti patres ac matres sic eis generationi tantummodo consulentes utebantur, ut ille naturalis motus nullo modo turpis esset, qui non libidini sed rationi serviret. Quanto magis ergo in sancta virgine Maria, quae Christi carnem fide concepit, nihil habuerunt turpitudinis membra, quae nec humano licitoque conceptui sed divino tantum partui servierunt?" Contra Faustum, lib. 29.

This passage is important, and it should be compared with the other passage, quoted elsewhere¹ in which St. Augustine insists upon the truth that

“Christ has shown very usefully in the body of his mother that there is nothing shameful that is chaste (*nihil pudendum esse quod castum est*)”\

Finally, St. Augustine asserts once more that “In no wise, and especially prior to sin, could God have made anything *inhonestum* among the organs of the human body.”²

Such is the traditional Patristic exegesis of this assertion that there are parts of the human body which are “*inhonesta*”.

To complete the subject, let us now see how the matter is treated by St. Thomas Aquinas. He does not discuss it anywhere in the *Summa Theologica*. But naturally he was forced to do so when commenting on I Corinthians. Here is his exegesis of verse 23 of chapter xii:

“When St. Paul says: ‘those things which we think, etc.’, he compares the members of the body from the standpoint of their exterior cult. . . . This exterior cult of the members of the body is concerned with two points, firstly their honour, which is the aim of those things used for ornamentation, such as jewels and precious metals, and secondly their ‘honesty’, which is the aim of those things used for covering, such as trousers, etc. As regards the first kind of cult, he says to begin with: ‘Those members of the body which we think to be less noble, we surround with more abundant honour’, that is, with greater decoration, and so for instance earrings are sometimes hung on ears, but nothing is placed on the eyes; and again decorated and jewelled shoes are placed on feet . . . but the hands are kept bare. . . . Secondly he deals with the cult of ‘honesty’, saying: ‘And those things which are *inhonesta*, have a more abundant ‘honesty’, that is, through the care of man. Certain members are said to be ‘*inhonesta*’ in Scripture, not because of any turpitude of sin in them, but because of the disobedience in our genital organs which has resulted from original sin. Or again because they are for an ignoble use, as is the case with all members which serve for the emission of superfluities. To these more abundant ‘honesty’ is given when

¹ See p. 98.

² “Nullo modo Deus, et, hoc quod est pejus, ante peccatum, aliquid faceret in membris humani corporis *inhonestum*.” *Contra Julianum*, Lib. IV, 80, Migne, P.L., Vol. 44, col. 779-780.

we more carefully cover them, whereas this is not required in the case of members destined for higher uses.”¹

St. Thomas, then, is very careful to explain that the sex organs are said to be ‘inhonesta’, not because of any sinful turpitude in them, but because original sin has resulted in their lack of control by reason and will. His second explanation, based upon their excretory function, is not so satisfactory. For, as we have seen, there is nothing really ignoble about the process of excretion. And moreover, as we have pointed out elsewhere,² St. Thomas himself allows that this process would have involved no indecency in the state of innocence.

In any case, in view of the fact that St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas are so careful to explain and limit the sense in which the sex organs are said to be ‘inhonesta’, we may be permitted to express our regret that later moral theologians should have applied the term in question to these organs without any explanation or limitation. In so doing, they have unconsciously tended to inculcate the view which St. Augustine himself described as “blasphemous”, i.e., the view that God Himself has created organs which are ‘inhonesta’. Either the term should never be used without explanation, or else it should not be used at all.

¹ “Dicuntur membra aliqua inhonesta in sanctis, non propter aliquam peccati turpitudinem, sed propter inobedientiam membrorum genitalium subsecutam ex peccato originali. Vel etiam quia sunt ignobili usui deputata, sicut omnia membra quae deserviunt emissioni superfluitatum, quibus abundantior honestas adhibetur, dum studiosius teguntur, quo non indigent membra nobilibus usibus deputata.” In I. Cor., cap. 12 lectio 3.

² Part One, p. 19, n. 1.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE GREEK FATHERS

In the New Testament, as we have seen, we find on the one hand a very high doctrine on marriage, with an emphasis on its religious and symbolical character and, on the other hand, an exaltation of the unmarried state as superior to the state of matrimony, if adopted for religious reasons.

Subsequent Christian Tradition has consisted throughout of a development of these two main ideas, with a fuller discussion of minor points. On the two main principles involved, the religious excellence of marriage, and the religious superiority of virginity, the tradition of the Catholic Church has been constant. But that is not to say that unwise or unguarded language on some points is not to be found in the writings of some of the Fathers of the Church, or that on some matters, ideas have not changed from time to time. Even so, this incidental and temporal variation must not be allowed to overshadow the great and universal consent of Christian Tradition on the two main principles involved.

We have no space here to give a detailed exposition of the teaching of Christian Tradition on these matters. Those interested should consult the great works of reference, such as the *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, or the *Dictionnaire Apologetique de la Foi Catholique*, or again the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. But there are one or two points of special interest which call for treatment, and these form the subjects of the present chapters.

In general, we may say that the Greek Fathers tended to hold the balance more fairly between marriage and virginity, and to avoid exaggeration in either direction. An interesting instance is provided in the *Banquet of Ten Virgins*, written by Methodius, Bishop of Olympus in Lycia, in the third century. This is a work devoted especially to the praise of virginity, but the bishop is careful to deprecate any condemnation of marriage. Here is an extract from the Second Oration:

“It seems to me plain from the Scriptures that the Word of God, when He introduced virginity into the world, did not altogether abrogate matrimony. It does not follow that, because the moon is greater, therefore the light of the other stars is at once ex-

tinguished. Let us begin with the Book of Genesis. . . . 'Increase and multiply' . . . This divine oracle and command to propagate the race is in force and is observed also to-day, and God continues to form human beings also in these our own times. . . . When the predestined number of human beings has been completed, then indeed it will be for man to abstain from generation. In the meantime, man must continue. . . . Hence now also, God commands us: 'Increase and multiply.' Nor is it right to condemn the command of the Creator, as a result of which we ourselves exist. For the beginning of the generation of all human beings is the depositing of the (male) seed in the genital soil (of the female), so that bone derived from bone by a hidden power, and flesh from flesh, may once more be fashioned into a new human being by the same Fashioner (who formed Eve from Adam, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh). For thus, I think, is fulfilled the statement: 'This now is bone from my bones, and flesh of my flesh.' For I think that this was foreshadowed by that first deep sleep of ecstasy experienced by the first man; that prefigured the pleasure of love in a man when, overcome by the desire of sexual union, he, as it were, takes leave of himself, rendered effeminate with female joys in coitus, so that once again, something taken from his bones and flesh may, as I have said, produce another human being. For, as those who have experienced the marriage act have informed us, when the harmony of bodies has been upset by the titillations of the sex union, a rich and prolific portion of blood, itself a certain liquid form of bone, gathered from the various members of the body and becoming a thick liquid, is expelled through the natural channels into the living soil of the woman. Well is it said that 'because of this, a man leaves his father and mother', being impelled elsewhere by a strong power, and, forgetting all else, when he is joined to a woman in conjugal embraces, he becomes wholly subject to the desire of woman (for the time being), and thus is a rib provided by the divine Workman that it may be taken away, and that the father may appear once more in the person of his son.

"Hence, inasmuch as God continues to fashion man daily, down to our own time, through the marital union, how could it be otherwise than rash to condemn human generation, in which the Almighty Creator himself does not hesitate to join in with his immaculate hands? . . . And again, how foolish it would be to forbid nuptial unions, seeing that we hope that, after ourselves, there will still be future martyrs, and holy men and women? ..

This frank and, at the same time, magnificent apologia for marriage.

occurring in a third century defence of virginity, deserves to be far more widely known. Of particular interest is the holy bishop's comparison between the formation of Eve from Adam's body in a deep sleep, and the withdrawal of the seed from the body of the husband in the ecstasy of the marriage act, and the bishop's application to the resulting child of the words which Adam originally spoke of Eve: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh."

The Greek Fathers were thus careful to avoid any condemnation of marriage, even when using somewhat exaggerated language in praise of virginity. Another proof of their care to avoid anything which savoured of heretical exaggeration in the matter is to be found in their attitude towards castration. The case of Origen brings this out very plainly. Origen, though much addicted to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, at first understood very literally Our Lord's words concerning those who have "made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake" {Matt, xix, 12). And, as he was a young man, and accustomed to expound the Christian religion to women as well as to men, he thought it advisable, as a measure of prudence, to deprive himself of his manhood. The matter was kept as secret as possible, but Origen informed Demetrius, his bishop. Origen was at that time a layman. But some time later he went from Alexandria to Greece, and was there ordained a priest, apparently without any reference to Demetrius, who was Bishop of Alexandria. There was no ecclesiastical law at that time excluding those who had voluntarily undergone castration from the priesthood, but it may well be that Origen was regarded by some as hardly a suitable subject for ordination. In any case, the question came up for discussion at the Council of Nicaea in 325. This, of course, was in the main an Eastern Council, though the Holy See was represented, and thoroughly approved of its decrees. The first Canon of this Council ordained that persons castrated by their masters, or by barbarians or physicians, might become priests, and lawfully exercise their ministry. But those who deliberately undergo castration are not to be ordained, or if already priests, are to cease to exercise their ministry. Thus did the Church express her formal disapproval of those who gave too strict and literal an interpretation to Our Lord's commendation of virginity, as recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel.

There were, on the other hand, some early heretics who insisted too strongly upon marriage, and despised virginity. This is particularly the case with the Clementine [^]Apocrypha,¹ and also with the

¹See, for instance, the Clementine Homilies, HI, 68.

Didascalia Apostolorum, written, apparently, in Transjordan in the first half of the third century.¹

Possibly by way of reaction against this exaggerated recommendation and praise of marriage, virginity is often set forth in the apocryphal Acts of Apostles, not merely as an ideal, but as a strict duty. Thus, the apocryphal Acts of Paul, ch. xii, say that the Apostle "separated young men from women, and virgins from men, telling them that there could be no resurrection for them unless they remained chaste, and instead of soiling their flesh, kept it pure." Again, the Acts of Peter say that "many women, affected by the preaching of chastity, separated from their husbands, and men likewise kept away from the beds of their wives, because they wished to honour God in sanctity and chastity" (ch. xxxiv). Pere Lebreton remarks that "the condemnation of marriage is manifest in the Acts of John, Thomas, and Andrew."² In one fragment of the Acts of John, the Apostle, invited to a wedding, explains to the bridal pair that the conjugal act is a crime and a sin. Again, in ch. Ixiii, Drusiana, though pressed by her husband Andronicus, refuses to allow him to perform the conjugal act, even though threatened with death: "She preferred to die rather than to accomplish this horror." Similar statements are to be found in the Acts of Thomas?

These apocryphal Acts were, of course, tainted with Ebionite and Gnostic ideas, and were in many points plainly heretical. But we may well see here the beginning of a deformation of the Christian Tradition which will have its echoes even in some altogether orthodox writers, both then and since.

In the Acts of John, ch. lxxviii, Andronicus is consoled for the death of his wife by a picture of all the cares which result from having a wife and children. Similarly, many orthodox Fathers seem to go out of their way to dwell upon the cares of the marriage state, and to exalt the state of virginity because of its freedom from such cares. Thus there is, according to N. P. Williams,⁴ a "terrible indictment of marriage" in chapter 3 of St. Gregory of Nyssa's treatise, *De Virginitate*, which is all the more surprising in that St. Gregory was himself a married man. But against this, we must point out that Gregory himself is careful to explain that his praises of virginity are not to be understood as a condemnation of marriage, for this also has received the blessing of God.⁵

¹ See the edition by Dom Connolly, ch. xxiii, and p. xlv of the Introduction. The author of the *Didascalia*, however, is not favourable to second marriages, and altogether condemns third marriages (ch. xiv). A candidate for the episcopate should be one who has been a good father and a good husband.

² *History of the Primitive Church*, Vol. IV.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *The Fall and Original Sin*, p. 273.

⁵ *De Virginitate*, ch. vii. Migne, P.G., Vol. XLVI, col. 353, 354.

St. John Chrysostom is an interesting writer. On the one hand he seems to have held that, if Adam had not fallen, there would have been no sexual generation:

“Before their disobedience, they imitated the life of angels, and there was no speech concerning sexual matters. How could there have been, seeing that they were not then subject to bodily necessities? And thus, from the beginning, virginity was given the palm of precedence. But afterwards, when disobedience entered in, and the way was opened to sin, then virginity fled away . . . and the law of marital congress was substituted. . . . When sin had entered through disobedience . . . as a result Almighty God, according to his wisdom, provided for the propagation of the human race, and granted that our race should be increased through sexual union” (Horn, xviii in Genesis, 4).

Again, especially in his earlier works, St. John Chrysostom used exaggerated language when singing the praises of virginity. Yet he never went so far as to condemn marriage absolutely, and in his treatise *On Virginity*, he teaches explicitly that marriage is good, though virginity is preferable. His general doctrine may be summed up as follows:

x. Marriage is not an obstacle to salvation, for otherwise God would not have instituted it. Nor is it, at least in itself, an unsurmountable obstacle against the practice of religious duties,
p 2. God established marriage with a view to the propagation of children, but as a result of the fallen state of mankind, its chief end at present is to be a remedy for concupiscence.

3. Marriage, which was established by God the Creator, has neither been destroyed nor lowered by Jesus, who on the contrary honoured and sanctified it by being present at the marriage at Cana.

4. Even so, marriage is not the perfect state. Or, as St. John Chrysostom expressly says in his work *On Virginity*: “My view is that virginity is greatly superior to marriage. And yet it does not follow that I put marriage amongst those things which are evil. On the contrary, I give it great praise: it is, for those who wish to use it rightly, a remedy for concupiscence which keeps nature within its just limits. Marriage is good: virginity is still more admirable, precisely because it is better.”¹

Chrysostom's mind was made even clearer in his 12th Homily on St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, obviously a sermon preached from the pulpit of his cathedral church in Constantinople. In this homily

¹ Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique, Vol. IX, cols. 2089-2090, with references there given.

he quotes and explains the statement of Our Lord, recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, that husband and wife become one flesh in marriage. He continues thus:

“How do they become one flesh? It is as if you were to take the purest part of gold, and mingle it with other gold. In the same way, indeed, the woman, receiving the richest part (of man), fused, as it were, by pleasure, nourishes it and cherishes it, and at the same time contributes her own share, and then restores it back as a human being. Thus, the child is a sort of bridge, so that the three become one flesh. . . . Hence it says, with an accuracy of expression, not ‘they shall be one flesh’, but ‘into one flesh’ (eis sarka man), namely, the flesh of the child, which connects them together. But does this imply that, when there is no child, they will still be two (and not one)? No . . . for their coming together has this effect: it diffuses and commingles the bodies of both. And as one who, by putting ointment into oil, makes the whole mass one, so in truth we have here.

“I know that many are shocked (literally ‘ashamed’) at what I am saying. The cause of this is lasciviousness and unchasteness.¹ The fact that marriages are made and depraved in that manner has given them an evil repute. Yet ‘marriage is honourable, and the bed undefiled’. Why are you ashamed of what is honourable? Why do you blush at what is undefiled? So much for the heretics. . . . I want to have marriage thoroughly purified, and so to bring it back once more to its proper nobility, and thus stop the mouths of the heretics. The gift of God is insulted, the root of our generation! Round about that root there is indeed much dung and filth. Let us cleanse that away by our discourse. . . . I want to show you that you ought not be to ashamed at what I say, but at what you yourselves do. But you, manifesting no shame at the latter, are yet ashamed at the former. Surely you are thereby condemning God, who has decreed these things.”²

In another Homily, St. John Chrysostom gives some excellent practical rules and advice for husbands and wives. Truly, though a bachelor bishop, he showed himself to be a tender and wise father to all his flock. We cannot abstain from quoting one sentence from this other homily:

¹ The Greek here obviously signifies the unchastity etc., of the persons in question, not of the subject-matter. The Latin translation in Migne, gives: “causa autem eorum quae dixi est libido et impudicitia.” The Oxford English translation adds the words: “of those of whom I have spoken.” This correctly represents the sense of the original.

² Horn. XII in Coloss. Would that such sermons were more frequently preached in our own time!

“Surely, if marriage were a thing to be condemned, never would St. Paul have called Christ and the Church a bridegroom and bride.”¹

We have already set forth the teaching of St. John Chrysostom on the essentially honest and holy character of the organs of sex.²

¹ Horn. XX. in Ephes.

² See pp. 134-135.

CHAPTER TWENTY

SEX IN THE LATIN FATHERS AND THEOLOGICIANS

Turning now from the East to the West, we find, as we should expect, the same fundamental principles as those expounded by the Greek Fathers. But unfortunately, we find at the same time a tendency to depreciate marriage, and to use exaggerated language concerning the female sex in general, and the married state in particular. We single out three great writers for comment: St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine.¹

St. Jerome on the one hand protests that he does not condemn marriage, as heretics do, or regard all sexual unions as impure. He says that he is aware that marriage is honourable, and the bed undefiled. Passages to this effect occur especially in his work *Against Jovinian*.² But, in spite of this, he allows himself in the same work to use very exaggerated and misleading language. Here are some examples. St. Paul says, it is good for a man not to touch a woman: therefore it is bad to do so, for there is no contrary to good other than the bad.³ How can marriage be good, seeing that it renders prayer difficult?⁴ It is not conducive to sanctity, and though there have been saints among married people, these have kept the virginal life in the married state.⁵ Priests, precisely because they are bound to pray, should abstain from marriage.⁶

Significantly enough, many of St. Jerome's expressions were criticised in Rome, and the great Doctor thought it prudent to

¹ We have no space to give an exhaustive account of the treatment of marriage questions in the Latin Fathers. The student will find a comprehensive survey in the article *Marriage* in the *Diet. de Thiol. Cath.* We ought however, to mention that Tertullian who, as we said on p. 127, held very pessimistic views about marriage when he had become a Montanist, was much more favourable to wedlock as a Catholic. See the article *Marriage* just mentioned, col. 2081.

² See quotations in *Diet. Theol. Cath.*, Vol. IX, col. 2092.

³ *Adv. Jovinianum*, I, 7: "Malum est ergo (mulierem) tangere: nihil enim bono contrarium est nisi malum."

⁴ *Adv. Helvidium*, ii, 20; *Adv. Jovinianum*, i, 7. Cf. *Adv. Jovinianum*, i, 34, quoted below, in footnote 6.

⁵ *Adv. Helvidium*, 21: "Non negamus viduas, non negamus maritatas sanctas mulieres inveniri, sed quae uxores esse desierint, quae in ipsa necessitate conjugii virginum imitentur castitatem."

⁶ *Adv. Jovinianum*, i, 34: "Si laicus, et quicumque fidelis orare non potest nisi careat officio conjugali, sacerdoti, cui semper pro populo offerenda sunt sacrificia, semper orandum est. Si semper orandum est, ergo semper carendum matrimonio. Eliguntur mariti in sacerdotium non nego, quia non sunt tanti virgines quanti necessarii sunt sacerdotes."

explain his meaning, and in doing so, he more or less admitted that he had used extreme language, and he moderated it in certain cases. Even so, he still held that those who exercise the conjugal act should abstain from Communion for a day or two.¹ To sum up, St. Jerome's intention is perfectly orthodox, but his language is sometimes misleading and unfortunate.

Like St. Jerome, St. Ambrose delights to sing the praises of virginity, and to emphasise its superiority over the married state. Even so, he is careful not to condemn this state as such. Here, for instance, is a quotation from his *Apology for David*, ch. xi:

“Marriage is indeed good, and the copula holy. Nevertheless, as St. Paul says, let those who have wives be as those who have not. The marriage bed is undefiled, and no one is to defraud the other party, except for a time, that they may give themselves to prayer. Even so, according to the Apostle, a man does not give himself to prayer while he is exercising the use of the bodily contract.”

Again, writing to Pope St. Siricius, he says:

“We do not deny that marriage has been sanctified by Christ. A good wife is rightly praised, but a pious virgin is rightly preferred to her. Marriage is good, and provides for the succession of human posterity, but virginity is better. . . - (Epist. xlii, 3).

Finally we come to St. Augustine. This great Doctor laid the foundations of the classical Catholic doctrine on marriage, which will be developed in due course by St. Thomas Aquinas and the great theologians of the Scholastic period. It is worthy of note that Pope Pius XI's great Encyclical on Christian Marriage is based upon the three good things which make marriage a blessing, proles, fides, sacramentum.² Even so, St. Augustine's thought was to some extent affected by his early allegiance to Manichaeism, from which he may unconsciously have derived some of his ideas.³ Further, his quasi-identification of original sin in Adam's descendents with concupiscence manifested especially in sexual desire,⁴ together with his theory that it is this concupiscence which accounts for the transmission of original sin, led him to regard the marriage act, as in

¹ Letter to Pammachius, Epist. xlvi, Diet. Theol. Cath., col. 2092.

² Casti Connubii, Proemium\ Augustine, De bono conjugali, cap. xxiv.

³ On this point, see the judicious remarks of P. de Labriolle in the *Histoire de l'Eglise* of Fliche-Martin, Vol. IV, p. 64.

⁴ See pp. 54-55.

some sense, always accompanied by evil in fallen man.¹ Even so, Augustine insisted that the marriage act, performed solely for the sake of procreating children, is without sin, viewed in itself.² This is difficult to explain, in view of the saint's teaching that concupiscence normally accompanies each sexual act. One explanation he seems to suggest is that, whereas concupiscence is certainly accompanied by guilt in the non-baptised, precisely because of its association with the guilt of original sin, its presence in those who have been baptised does not imply guilt, for original sin in them has been remitted. Accordingly, Augustine says that though concupiscence remains in the baptised, it is not imputed to them as sin,³ though it is a matter for shame in them.

But elsewhere St. Augustine seems to give another and a less satisfactory explanation. He holds, as we have said, that if the marriage act is performed solely for the sake of procreating children, it is lawful and free from sin, in itself. But if it is performed for some purpose other than procreating children, e.g., in order to satisfy sexual desire, then, he maintains, it is venially sinful.⁴ The saint is led to this conclusion, partly because of his own teaching concerning the equation between concupiscence and original sin, and partly because he, in common with other Fathers, misunderstood the significance of a statement made by St. Paul in the First Epistle to the

1 "Sic enim modo non invenio sine pruriente libidine concumbentem. . . . Hoc non esse nuptiis imputandum, quod etsi non esset nuptiae tamen essent; quarum bonum non aufertur isto malo, sed ab eis et hoc malum in usum vertitur bono. Verum quia jam ista conditione mortalium nunc simul aguntur concubitus et libido; eo fit ut cum libido reprehenditur, etiam nuptialis concubitus licitus et honestus reprehendi putetur ab eis qui nolunt discernere ista vel nesciunt.... Illud autem non (est) nuptiarum sed carnalis concupiscentiae malum, de quo erubescunt et nuptiae. Sed quia sine illo malo fieri non potest nuptiarum bonum, hoc est propagatio filiorum, ubi ad hujusmodi opus venit, secreta quaeruntur . . . atque ita nuptiae sinuntur exercere quod licet, ut non negligent occultare quod dedecet. Hic est quod infantes etiam, qui peccare non possunt, non tamen sine peccati contagione nascuntur, non ex hoc quod licet, sed ex eo quod dedecet. Nam ex hoc quod licet, natura nascitur; ex illo quod dedecet, vitium. Naturae nascentis est auctor Deus . . . vitii vero auctor est diaboli decipientis calliditas, et hominis consentientis voluntas." De peccato originali, i, cap. xxxvi and xxxvii.

2 "Concubitus necessarius causa generandi, inculpabilis est. Ille autem qui ultra istam necessitatem progreditur, jam non rationi sed libidini obsequitur." De bono conjugali, cap. x. "Sola generandi causa est inculpabilis sexus utriusque commixtio."—Sermo cccli, 5.

3 "In eis qui regenerantur in Christo . . . necesse est ut reatus etiam hujus licet adhuc manentis concupiscentiae remittatur, ut in peccatum sicut dixi, non imputatur."—De nuptiis et concupiscentia, I, cap. xxvi. "Concupiscentiae reatus in baptismo solvitur, infirmitas manet,"—detract. I, xv, 2.

4 "Conjugalis concubitus generandi gratia, non habet culpam; concupiscentiae vero satandae, sed tamen cum conjugio, propter thori fidem, venialem habet culpam."—De bono conjugali, cap. vi. "Illum concubitum secundum veniam concedit (Apostolus) qui fit per incontinentiam, non sola causa procreandi et aliquando nulla causa procreandi."—Ibid., cap. x. "Si ambo tali concupiscentiae subiguntur, rem faciunt non plane nuptiarum. Verumtamen si magis in sua conjunctione diligunt quod honestum quam quod inhonestum est . . . hoc eis auctore Apostolo secundum veniam conceditur."—Ibid., 11.

Corinthians, ch. vii. Here the Apostle, after saying that married persons may abstain from the sex act for a time, in order to give themselves to prayer, goes on to tell them to resume normal sex relations, lest Satan tempt them through incontinence. He adds: "This I say by way of concession, not by way of command" (vii, 6, Westminster Version). The latin version used by St. Augustine rendered this verse in the following way: "Hoc autem dico secundum veniam . . ." and from this the saint inferred that "venia" is being used in the sense of "pardon", and that accordingly, the Apostle is really saying that to use the sex act to satisfy concupiscence, and not for the sake of generating children, is a venial sin, i.e., a sin which is easily pardoned, but which is a sin nevertheless. This would apply, for instance, to sexual intercourse which takes place once a child is known to have been conceived. It would seem to follow from this that, inasmuch as it is practically impossible to perform the sex act solely in order to generate children and not in any degree in order to satisfy sex desire, the marriage act, though not in itself sinful, when performed for the right purpose, is in fact always accompanied by sin, because of the presence of this sinful motive.¹ The Church has not followed St. Augustine in this matter, though in fact his teaching was repeated, and even exaggerated, by several medieval theologians.²

St. Augustine teaches, of course, that virginity is superior to marriage. He goes on to say that, even in married people, it is virtuous to abstain from the sex act. The conjugal act is not in any way necessary, and in any case there will always be some who will exercise it. And even if the world should come to an end through the spread of this practice of continence, this would merely mean the speedier advent of the Kingdom of God in Heaven.³

The consistent teaching of Catholic Tradition that virginity is in itself superior to the married state was bound to lead to the spread of celibacy amongst the clergy. But here again, we find a difference

¹ "Tam magnum est, ut multi hodie facilius se tota vita ab omni concubitu abstineant quam modum teneant non coeundi nisi prolis causa. . . . Quern tandem audivimus inter familiaria colloquia, sive eorum qui conjugati sunt, sive qui fuerunt, indicantem nobis nunquam se conjugii esse commixtum nisi sperando conceptum?"—*Ibid.*, cap. xiii. Hence though St. Augustine concedes the abstract possibility of the sex act being free from sin, he seems to doubt whether the possibility is realised, at least frequently.

² See page 152.

³ "Novi qui murmurent: 'Quid si', inquit, 'omnes homines velint ab omni concubitu continere, unde subsistet genus humanum?' Utinam omnes hoc vellent . . . multo citius Dei civitas compleretur, et acceleraretur terminus saeculi. . . . Unde mihi videtur hoc tempore solos eos qui se non continent, conjugari oportere."—*De bono conjugati*, cap. x. St. Augustine's views on other sexual matters have been dealt with elsewhere in the present work. See for instance pp. 16-17 for his teaching that sexual generation would have taken place had there been no Fall; also p. 136 for his repudiation of the "blasphemous" idea that God could have made organs really "inhonest".

between East and West. Among the Greeks, celibacy has been an ideal but not a law, while in the West it has in the course of time become a law, ever increasing in strictness.

The attitude of the East is well exemplified by an incident at the first Council of Nicaea in 325. A quarter of a century earlier, a local Council held at Elvira in Spain had enacted that in the future only unmarried men were to be raised to sacred orders, and those who were already married were to cease to live with their wives, under pain of deposition. Hosius of Cordova, who had been present at this Council of Elvira, seems also to have presided at the Council of Nicaea. He may have been the author of an attempt to enact similar legislation at this later Council, which was mainly Eastern in its composition. But an aged bishop named Paphnutius, who had lost an eye in the persecution under Maximian, and who was himself a celibate, opposed the proposal. His words are found in Socrates, the Greek historian of the fifth century, and are given thus by Hefele in his *Histoire des Conciles*:

“Paphnutius declared with a loud voice that too heavy a yoke ought not to be laid upon the clergy; that marriage and married intercourse are of themselves honourable and undefiled; that the Church ought not to be injured by an extreme severity, for all could not live in absolute continence. . . . The intercourse of a man with his lawful wife could be a chaste intercourse. It would therefore be sufficient if, according to the ancient tradition of the Church, those who had taken holy orders without being married were prohibited from marrying subsequently; but those clergy who had married previously as laymen were not to be separated from their wives.”

Paphnutius's speech won the day, and the Council of Nicaea abstained from enacting a law requiring clerical celibacy. The custom there sanctioned, whereby clerics already married could continue to live with their wives, while those not married had to remain single, has ever since been the custom of the Eastern Churches, and is still observed in the main by Catholics of the Eastern rites united to the Holy See, in spite of pressure which has from time to time been brought upon them.

In the West, on the other hand, the enactment of the Council of Elvira in 300 a.d. was but the first of a series of laws of ever-increasing severity,¹ culminating in the Decrees of the First Lateran

¹ Even so, it must be pointed out that ecclesiastical law and practice have been subject to certain fluctuations, according to the conditions of the time. Thus, some fourth century bishops reacted strongly against the Priscillianist and other denials of the

Council in 1123, pronouncing the subsequent marriages of clerics to be invalid. The Latin Church naturally prefers its own discipline in this matter, but even so, it has been careful not to condemn the laxer discipline of the Eastern Churches. Thus, Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical on the Catholic Priesthood, while praising the Western insistence upon celibacy, and pointing out that even in the East it is revered and honoured, adds these words:

“We do not wish that what we have said in commendation of clerical celibacy should be interpreted as though it were our intention in any way to blame, or, as it were, disapprove the different discipline legitimately prevailing in the Eastern Church. What we have said has been meant solely to exalt in the Lord something we consider one of the purest glories of the Catholic priesthood. . . .”¹

The Western custom merely amounts to a decision on the part of the Church authorities to raise to the priesthood only those who are celibates, and who are prepared to continue as such.² The Church compels no man to enter the priesthood, and thus she compels no man to undertake the heavy burden of celibacy.

The law of ecclesiastical celibacy certainly illustrates the Church’s teaching that virginity is, as a state, higher than marriage. But it does not, of course, imply any condemnation or spurning of marriage as such. The same Church which insists upon celibacy in its ministers teaches solemnly that marriage is a Sacrament of the Gospel, and that it is accordingly a holy state, and indeed a divine vocation. Popes have always insisted upon the celibacy of the clergy. But that has not prevented Leo XIII and Pius XI among others from issuing Encyclical Letters addressed to the whole Church and defending the holiness of the married state.

The statement of St. Augustine that the only legitimate motive for the performance of the sex act is the procreation of children led naturally to the conclusion that it is sinful for married people to perform it once the wife is known to be pregnant. Both before and

sanctity of marriage, and St. Jerome even complains of bishops who declined to confer the diaconate upon unmarried clerics. “They dispense the sacraments of Christ,” he bitterly remarks, “only to those whose wives are either with child or who carry wailing children in their arms” (*Contra Vigilantium*, ii). St. Jerome, as we have said, never tried to conceal his dislike for the marriage state.

¹ C.T.S. translation, 2nd edn., p. 28.

² As an exception to the rule here stated, the Church sometimes admits to ordination a married man who is prepared to separate from his wife, provided the latter is willing freely to take a vow of chastity. Further, a married man may be raised to the priesthood if his wife dies.

during his time, some Fathers of the Church expressly forbade intercourse during pregnancy, under pain of sin. Among these were Clement of Alexandria and St. Ambrose. The latter wrote:

“In order to restrain your ardour, bear in mind the presence of the hand of your Maker, forming a human being in the womb. He is at work, and will you lustfully approach the sacred womb? Either be like the beasts, or fear God” (In Lt/t., lib. i, n. 44).

St. Gregory the Great adopted an even more uncompromising attitude. He says indeed that the conjugal act is in itself lawful and chaste, for it was instituted by God Himself. Nevertheless, in practice the sex act is, according to St. Gregory, always accompanied by sin, because it is not exercised with due moderation and control. Hence, writing to St. Augustine of Canterbury, the Pope says that, in accordance with the constant custom in Rome, a husband who has had intercourse with his wife should purify himself by washing, and out of reverence keep away from church for a time. The reason given is that, while the matrimonial act is not itself sinful, it is always accompanied by the pleasure of the flesh, which itself cannot be free from fault.¹ To this we must add that, according to Fr. Davis, intercourse during pregnancy was similarly forbidden by the Penitentials, and in particular, by that of Rome (Tit. 7, cc. 9, 10), and by that of Venerable Bede.²

Doubtless one motive for this very stern legislation was the avoiding of all risk of abortion or other danger to the foetus in the womb. But a partial cause was also, in all probability, the accepted belief that the generation of offspring was the only lawful motive for the sex act.

In the Middle Ages, the Church had to encounter and react against the Henricians, Cathari, Albigenses and other heretics, who carried on the Manichaean tradition, definitely condemned the institution of marriage, and regarded the marriage act itself as essentially sinful. The Church, as we should expect, opposed this heresy by insisting on the truth that marriage is a divine and holy institution. But at the same time, many medieval theologians carried on and even exaggerated the Augustinian idea that the sex act is, in practice, always accompanied by sin.³ One author describes this as the “*melior et celebrior opinio*.”⁴ Further, many writers went to extremes in advising abstinence from the conjugal act. Some,

¹ Epist., Lib. xi, lxiv.

² Moral Principles and Practice, p. 216.

³ See Diet. Theol. Cath., Vol. IX, col. 2177, etc.

⁴ Ibid., col. 2177.

for instance, recommended abstinence on no less than five days out of seven: on Thursdays in memory of the arrest of Our Lord, on Fridays in commemoration of his death, on Saturdays in honour of the Blessed Virgin, on Sundays in honour of the Resurrection, and on Mondays in honour of the faithful departed. It is surprising that they did not find equally good motives for abstinence on the remaining two days of the week. More reasonable theologians, such as Petrus Cantor and Robert de Courson, pointed out that this very rigorous attitude constituted an indirect attack upon the institution of marriage itself.¹

In any case, abstinence was recommended on various feast days. Even St. Thomas says (*Summa Theologica*, Supply q. lxiv, art. 7) that "*diebus sacris non licet petere debitum*." Even so, he says that to ask for the debitum on a festal day is not a mortal sin (art. 8), and if one partner thus asks for the debt on a festal day, the other is bound to oblige (art. 9). This certainly constitutes a modification of earlier extreme views.

A similar feature of the Patristic and medieval treatment of the marriage act must be mentioned here, and that is the adoption of the practice of abstention from consummation of the marriage for three nights after the ceremony. This had its origin in the Book of Tobias (xxvi, 17-22), and it was strongly recommended, if not insisted upon, for Christians by the Council of Carthage in a.d. 298. The Decrees of this Council were held in very high esteem throughout the Middle Ages, and some pre-Reformation moral theologians went so far as to say that this abstention on the three nights after marriage was binding in conscience. Certainly the practice used to be recommended strongly in the address to the spouses in the Nuptial Mass. But it no longer appears there, and in any case, modern theologians agree that it constitutes nothing more than a counsel.²

One of the chief developments of medieval theology was the more accurate determination of the secondary ends of marriage and of the conjugal act. The motive of the act may be, not only the procreation of children, but also the rendering of the debt to the partner, or the avoiding of fornication, etc. The common doctrine, as elaborated by the scholastic theologians prior to Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, was that the sex act is without sin if performed solely for the procreation of children, but it is at least venially sinful

¹ *Ibid.*
² See article. *Droit du Seigneur*, in *Dictionnaire Apologetique*. It was a misunderstanding of this custom which gave rise to the legend that the feudal lord claimed the brides of his serfs for the first two nights. What actually is true is that some bishops were prepared to grant dispensations from the law forbidding intercourse on these nights between newly-weds.

if performed partly or wholly for other motives. But St. Thomas attacks the rigoristic views current before his time, and he regards the marriage act as without sin, not only if exercised for the sake of generating offspring, but also if performed to fulfil the marriage debt. On the other hand, if performed for other motives, he supports the view that it is at least venially sinful (*Summa*, *Supply* q. xlix, art. 5 and 6).

Later writers will modify still further the rigoristic view, and will cease to regard as sinful many acts condemned by the medieval writers following in the footsteps of the Fathers. As Fr. Davis puts it:

“Opinion on the legitimacy of intercourse for any other purpose than generation was formerly severe, but for a very long time now, those opinions have been abandoned, and it cannot be said that Catholic teaching condemns intercourse between married persons if it is not exercised for the purpose of procreation or of rendering the dues to the other partner. Consequently, Catholic teaching permits marital intercourse for the allaying of concupiscence, the expression of love, the comfort of married life, the safeguarding of the home, the rendering of dues to the other party, as well as for procreation. In fact, when the act is seen to be according to nature, it is legitimate.”¹

¹ *Moral Principles and Practice*, pp. 216-217. Fr. Davis's statement, however, needs some interpretation, as it is never lawful positively to exclude the procreation of children from one's intention. But this point will be made clearer in my own treatment of the subject in later chapters of this work.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE DEVELOPED THEORY OF SEX

I. MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT

Having outlined the teaching of the New Testament on sex and marriage, and traced its development in the Church's Tradition, we can now set forth this developed doctrine, especially on the subject of marriage, its sacramental character, and its duties. In this chapter we explain the sacred and sacramental character of the institution of matrimony.

The Church has officially defined, at the Council of Trent, that Matrimony is one of the Seven Sacraments instituted by Christ our Lord.¹ The Church has not indeed officially defined that Matrimony was instituted as a sacrament by Christ immediately, and there were some theologians, especially before the Council of Trent, who taught that some of the sacraments might have been instituted by the apostles, acting by divine authority. Further, St. Bonaventure seems to have taught that some sacraments may have been instituted by the apostles, precisely as promulgators of the complete Christian Revelation taught them by the Holy Ghost, and some modern theologians think that this hypothesis is not excluded by the Council of Trent. In any case, many modern theologians allow that, while Christ Himself directly and personally instituted all the seven sacraments. He left the question of the determination of the matter and form of some of them to the Apostles and/or their successors.

The case of Matrimony is further complicated by a fact which Pope Pius XI pointed out in his 'Encyclical on Marriage:

“That even natural wedlock has within it something that is sacred and religious can be established on grounds of natural reasons alone, as shown in ancient historical documents, in the unvarying conscience of peoples, and in their institutions and customs. And this religious character of marriage is ‘not adventitious but inherent in it... because it has God as its author.’... The sacred character of marriage, intimately connected with the sphere of religion and holy things, arises from its divine origin.... it arises also from its purpose, which is to beget and form children

¹ Session XXIV, Capitulum, and canon i.

for God, and to unite husband and wife with God by charity and mutual help; it arises, finally, from the natural function of marriage, instituted by the wise Providence of God the Creator to be a vehicle for the transmission of life, wherein parents act as ministers of the divine omnipotence.”¹

All this is true apart from the “new dignity” added to matrimony by its elevation to the rank of a Christian Sacrament.

This is no new feature of Catholic teaching. The Catechism of the Council of Trent declared that “the Gentiles themselves were convinced there was something divine in Marriage,” and that “among the Jews the laws regulating marriage were observed with deep religious respect, and it cannot be doubted that their unions were endowed with some degree of sanctity.” This Roman Catechism adds that, even so, the unions of the Jews “fell short of the real nature of a sacrament.”²

Some medieval scholastics, however, did not hesitate to say that matrimony was always, in some sense, a sacrament. Thus, Peter of Poitiers (Sent., Lib. IV, c. xiv, Migne, P.L., Vol. CCXI, col. 1257), and Alexander of Hales (Summa, IV, q. ii, membrum 2, ad. 1), say expressly that it was instituted as a sacrament in the Garden of Eden, adding that already it prefigured the union between Christ and the Church. Similarly, St. Thomas Aquinas regarded matrimony as a very ancient sacrament, pre-dating the written Law of Moses (In IV Sent., dist. 1, q. 1, a. 2, quest. 2, ad. 2; cf. Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 42, art. 2). St. Albert the Great, again, holds that the sacrament of matrimony was instituted in the Garden of Eden (Summa de creaturis), but only as a sign of grace, not as a cause of it. Elsewhere Albert says that the sacrament of matrimony had a threefold institution, one in the Garden of Eden, the second in the Old Law, and the third under Christ. Scotus, on the other hand, held that Christ was the true institutor of marriage as a sacrament (Opus oxoniensis, dist. xxvi, n. 13). And in any case, all the Scholastics admitted that a Christian sacrament differs from the earlier ones, inasmuch as it gives grace *ex opere operato*.

By the time of the Reformation, Catholic writers for the most part stressed the unique character of the Christian sacrament of matrimony, while still allowing that Jewish marriages were sacramental, in a certain sense.³ The Protestant Reformers, such as Melanchthon

¹ Christian Marriage, C.T.S. edn. 2nd edn. 1943, pp. 36-37. All our quotations from this Encyclical are from this revised translation.

² Compendium of Catechetical Instruction, Vol. II, pp. 505-306. The translation is by Mgr. J. Hagan.

³ Thus, the Cologne Enchiridion, published in 1537, says: “Matrimonium apud Judaeos sacramentum, fuisse quemadmodum aliae quoque veteris legis ceremoniae ac mysteria . . . sacramenta fuerunt” (p. 178). Also the Cologne Antididagma, published in

and Bucer, denied that Christian Marriage was essentially different from the earlier institution, and maintained that it is a sacrament only in the sense that it has ever been a sacred rite.¹

The Catholic doctrine was made plain once for all by the Council of Trent, which declared that Christ our Lord instituted matrimony as one of the seven sacraments of the New Law, leaving aside the question of the quasi-sacramental character of earlier marriages.

It is in the light of the widespread view that pre-Christian marriage was already sacramental that we must consider the New Testament evidence as to its character. Theologians freely admit that there is no express record of its institution as a sacrament by Christ our Lord to be found in the New Testament. But they urge that Christ surely added to the dignity of marriage by being present at the wedding at Cana and by working his first miracle there. They urge further that, by restoring to marriage its primitive indissolubility, Christ made it harder to be faithful to the marriage bond—a point which was made by the Apostles themselves, as we read in Matthew xix, 10: "If such be the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." [But Christ would not have made the duties of the married state so onerous without giving the special help required to fulfil them, i.e., grace. And finally, we have the express statement of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians that marriage is a great "mystery" because it signifies the union between Christ and the Church. Now, this latter union is one whereby the Church receives grace

1549: "Christus Sacramentum istud Matrimonii non solum confirmat sed et gratiam conjugalis castitatis . . . fidelibus promittitur. . . . Apud Judaeos etiam res sancta, verum apud Christianos res altior est, nempe externum et visibile signum invisibilis cujusdam gratiae" (p. i2ov).

1 We have already indicated that this subject was dealt with in early Anglican formularies. In the Institution of a Christian Man, or Bishop's Book, issued in 1537, the Sacrament of Matrimony is said to have been instituted by God in the Garden of Eden, and this doctrine is even attributed to St. Paul (Formularies of Faith, pp. 82, 86). All that Christ did was to "accept, approve and allow the same." The Sacrament of Matrimony is thus "no new sacrament instituted in the New Testament." Here the influence of the Protestant Reformers seems very marked. The same influence may doubtless be seen in the startling statement that "the act of procreation between men and women, which as of itself and of his own nature is damnable, is sanctified by the word of God." The Abbe Constant, who goes so far as to maintain that the doctrine of this Bishop's Book is "in perfect conformity to the teaching of the Church" (Downside Review, October, 1938), is either ignorant of the true Catholic doctrine, or of the doctrine actually taught in this Anglican formulary. In 1543, a new and revised work was issued by the authority of Henry VIII, under the title The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition of a Christian Man. This is more orthodox in tone. Instead of saying expressly that "the Sacrament of Matrimony was instituted by God . . . even from the beginning of the world," as was stated by the Bishops' Book, this new formulary says: "Thus was Matrimony instituted by God." But equally, the book abstains from saying that Christ raised Matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, and indeed it says nothing at all as to when it was instituted as a sacrament. Lastly, the statement of the Bishops' Book that the act of procreation is in itself damnable is changed to the statement that it is of itself "unlawful", and "is, by the sacrament, made lawful".

from Christ. Hence, marriage itself must similarly bring grace to the two parties. The argument is not peremptory, in fact, the Council of Trent itself only goes so far as to say that the grace of matrimony is “hinted at” (innuit) by St. Paul (Session XXIV, Prooemium). It is therefore not true to say, as has sometimes been said, that the Catholic doctrine of the sacramental character of matrimony has resulted merely from the fact that the Latin version of St. Paul’s words in the Epistle to the Ephesians has “sacramentum” for “musterion”. But it is certainly true that we derive our main knowledge of the sacramental character and dignity of marriage from St. Paul. And it is noteworthy that St. Paul is the source indicated by Pope Leo XIII in the following statement in his own Encyclical on Marriage, *Arcanum Divinae*:

“To the Apostles, as to our masters, are to be referred the doctrines which our holy Fathers, the Councils, and the Tradition of the Universal Church have always taught, namely, that Christ our Lord raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. . . .”

For the Pope goes on to quote various passages from St. Paul’s Epistles. Catholic Tradition has duly profited by the teachings of St. Paul, and has asserted ever more explicitly the sacramental character of Christian Marriage, culminating in the final definition by the Council of Trent.

It is to be noted also that the same Council finally settled the question of the indissolubility of a consummated Christian marriage, even in the case of adultery. The early Christian Fathers had unanimously taught that marriage is thus indissoluble. Here is a quotation from a second century Christian document, the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

“I said unto him: ‘What, therefore, is to be done, if the woman continues in her sin?’ He answered: ‘Let the husband put her away, and let him continue by himself. But if he shall put away his wife and marry another, he committeth adultery’ ”(Mand. IV).

Father Joyce remarks that “the Greek Church repudiated divorce absolutely until the sixth century”, adding that a “change came with the legislation of the Emperor Justinian. . . . For long they still refrained from giving canonical approval to the system of Justinian. But they dared not excommunicate those who chose to avail themselves of the imperial laws. After the breach with Rome, they no longer hesitated to give to divorce full ecclesiastical sanction” (*Six Sacraments*, pp. 240-241). This custom of granting divorce is still

observed by the separated Greek Churches, and for many centuries it was also observed by the Eastern Catholics united to the Holy See. The matter came up for final discussion at the Council of Trent, which passed the following Canon in Session XXIV:

“If any one saith that the Church hath erred in that she hath taught and doth teach . . . that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of one of the married parties . . . let him be anathema.”

Pope Pius XI has commented on this Decree thus:

“If the Church was not, and is not now, in error when she taught and still teaches this doctrine; and if, consequently, it is certain that the marriage bond cannot be dissolved even on the ground of adultery, then clearly all the other grounds of divorce much less serious, which are commonly advanced, have even less validity, and are to be entirely dismissed.”¹

The question of the possibility of polygamy under the Christian dispensation had come to the fore in connection with the Divorce of Henry VIII. Non-Catholic historians often assert that Pope Clement VII himself suggested to Henry VIII that he should take a second wife during the lifetime of his first one, Catherine of Aragon. No less an authority than Professor A. F. Pollard says so, in his *Henry VIII*, p. 207. He quotes in support a despatch written to the King by Gregory Casale, Bishop of Worcester, one of his Roman agents: “A few days since, the Pope secretly proposed to me the following condition: that your Majesty might be allowed to have two wives.” This remarkable statement occurs in a despatch by Casale dated September 18th, 1530, and it will be found in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, Vol. IV, p. 2,987. We shall understand it better, however, if we first point out that, three years earlier, i.e., in 1527, Henry VIII had sent Dr. Knight to Rome precisely with a request that he should be allowed to have two wives (see the letter in *English Historical Review*, Vol. XI, p. 597). Moreover, the King repeated the same request the following year, 1528, through two other agents, Briant and Vannes (*Letters and Papers*, Vol. IV, p. 4,977). Knight, indeed, wrote back to Henry saying he did not think he would be able to obtain this dispensation (*Letters and Papers*, Vol. IV, p. 1,552), and accordingly, Henry instructed his agent not to make the request (*Letter in Eng. Hist. Rev.*, loc. cit.). It seems clear, however, that the idea must have

¹ Encyclical on Christian Marriage, C.T.S. edn. p. 41.

been mooted in Rome, for there are three reports of Papal statements on the matter. The first is that of Casale on September 18th, 1530, already quoted. The second statement occurs in the course of a report by Dr. Benet dated October 27th the same year. This is to the effect that the Pope had spoken to Benet of "a dispensation for two wives, but so doubtfully that Benet suspects he spoke it for two purposes, one so that he should break it to the King and see if it would be accepted, thereby he should have gotten a means to bring Your Highness to grant that if he might dispense in this case, which is of no less force than your case is" (i.e., the question of the validity of the Papal dispensation in virtue of which Henry had married Katherine'), "consequently he might dispense in Your Highness's case" (and so the validity of Henry's marriage' with Catherine could not then be disputed). "The other was to entertain the King and defer the cause. Benet asked the Pope whether he was resolved that he could dispense in that case" (i.e., grant permission to have two wives). "He said, 'No,' but he had been told by a great doctor he might, for the avoidance of a greater scandal, but he would advise further with his Council. Lately he has said plainly that he cannot do it" (Letters and Papers, Vol. IV, iii, 2,023). The third reference is in a report from Ghinucci to Henry VIII, dated September 1530: "The Pope said he could with less scandal give the King a dispensation for two wives than grant what the writer asked. . . . The Pope continued to speak of the King's having two wives, and found several difficulties, especially that the Emperior would never consent to it" (Letters and Papers, Vol. IV, iii, 3,189).

The explanation would seem to be that, motivated doubtless by statements made by the Protestant Reformers to the effect that polygamy was not forbidden by any divine law,¹ Henry VIII had in fact asked the Pope whether a dispensation to have two wives could not be granted to him. One theologian—apparently Cardinal Cajetan²—thought that this was indeed within the Papal power. True, the Profession of Faith imposed upon Michael Palaeologus by Pope Gregory X at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 had stated that "the Holy Roman Church holds and teaches that neither is one man allowed to have several wives at the same time, nor one woman several husbands."³ But even so, it was not altogether clear whether this law was so absolute that it admitted of no exception under any circumstances. Hence the Pope may well have wondered, when the question was put, whether such a dispensation would come within

¹ In 1539 an express permission was granted by Luther and Mslanchthon to Philip of Hesse to have two wives.

² See Pastor, *History of the Popes*, Vol. X, p. 276.

³ Denzinger, *Encheiridion*, 463.

the Papal power. To settle the matter, he submitted the point to his Congregation of Cardinals, who at once decided in the negative, and the Pope informed the English envoys accordingly that such a dispensation was impossible. A few years later, i.e., in 1563, the Council of Trent passed the Canon we have referred to, and thus settled the matter for ever.¹

¹ In this chapter I have made use of two articles contributed by myself to the Clergy Review in October, 1935, and the Downside Review in 1937-

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE DEVELOPED THEOLOGY OF SEX

II. THE ENDS OF MARRIAGE AND OF THE SEX ACT

Having dealt with the sacred and sacramental character of matrimony, we can now pass on to consider the “ends” of marriage itself, and of the sex act.

In more than one passage in his works, the great St. Augustine distinguishes between three good things or blessings found in matrimony:

1. proles, or the generation of offspring,
2. fides, or the mutual faithfulness of the spouses,
3. sacramentum, accounting for the permanence of the contract.

The medieval theologians adopted this threefold scheme, sometimes adding a fourth good, as is done by St. Albert the Great, this fourth advantage being the lessening of concupiscence. St. Thomas Aquinas, however, reduces the blessings of marriage to three, holding that all others can be reduced to these. And it is to be noted that he links up these three blessings with three ends of marriage. Here is his treatment of this matter, in the *Summa Theologica*, III (Suppl.), q. 65, art. 1:

“Marriage has as its principal end the procreation and upbringing of children, which end belongs to man by reason of his generic nature, and hence is common to other animals; in this way we get offspring as the blessing attached to matrimony.

“But as a secondary end, as Aristotle says, we have, in man alone, a common sharing in tasks which are necessary in life, and from this standpoint, husband and wife owe faith to each other, and that is another blessing attached to matrimony.

“Marriage, as it exists among believers, has yet another end, and this consists in its signification of the union between Christ and the Church, and thus we get the sacrament as a matrimonial good.

“Hence, the first end is found in human-marriage, inasmuch as man is an animal; the second is in him precisely as man, and the third is in him qua believer.”¹

¹ “Matrimonium habet pro fine principali proles procreationem et educationem, qui quidem finis competit homini secundum naturam sui generis: unde et aliis animalibus

Again, in the *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 29, art. 2, St. Thomas explains that the "end of matrimony is the generating and upbringing of children, the former being brought about by the conjugal union, and the latter through the other works of husband and wife, whereby they help each other in bringing up their offspring."¹ It must be noted here that, as St. Thomas says again expressly (in his *Summa Theologica*, III. Suppl., q. 49, art. 2, ad. i), the sharing of common tasks between husband and wife is wholly ordered towards the education of children as to its end.² This is important.

The third end, the signification of the union between Christ and the Church, which belongs to matrimony specially as a sacrament, is not so obviously related, perhaps, to the primary end, the generation of offspring. Yet a little reflection will show that procreation is the ultimate end even of the mystical signification of matrimony. For the purpose of the union between Christ and the Church is that the latter should indeed be a fruitful Spouse, bringing forth many spiritual children. And in the same way, the union between Christ and the Church is shown forth in Christian Marriage precisely in so far as it is a fruitful union, whereby children are brought forth to God, and trained to become members of the Mystical Body.

Thus, we see that, so far as these three main ends of marriage are concerned, all converge ultimately towards the generation and upbringing of children, which is thus the primary or principal end of marriage.

There remains the further aspect of marriage, which has characterised it since the Fall of Man, namely, its value as a "remedy for concupiscence", in that it provides a natural and lawful outlet for sexual desires. This, again, is obviously subordinate to the procreation of children, for that is precisely the end which Nature seeks to obtain by means of the sex urge.³

est communis . . . et sic bonum matrimonii assignatur proles. Sed pro fine secundario, ut dicit Philosophus, habet in hominibus solis communicationem operum, quae sunt necessaria in vita. . . . Et secundum hoc fidem sibi invicem debent, quae est unum de bonis matrimonii. Habet ulterius alium finem, inquantum inter fideles est, scilicet significationem Christi et Ecclesiae; et sic bonum matrimonii dicitur sacramentum. Unde primus finis respondet matrimonio hominis, inquantum est animal; secundus, inquantum est homo; tertius, inquantum est fidelis."

¹ "Finis matrimonii est proles generanda et educanda: ad quorum primum pervenitur per concubitum conjugalem; ad secundum per alia opera viri et uxoris, quibus sibi invicem obsequuntur ad prolem nutriendum."

² "In prole non solum intelligitur procreatio prolis, sed etiam educatio ipsius, ad quam sicut ad finem ordinatur tota communicatio operum quae est inter virum et uxorem, inquantum sunt matrimonio conjunct! . . . et sic in prole, quasi in principali fine, alius quasi secundarius includitur."

³ It will be of interest here to give the "causes for which Matrimony was ordained" according to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer: "First, it was ordained for the procreation of children. . . . Secondly, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to

Hence, once again we arrive at the conclusion that the principal and primary end of marriage is the procreation of children. But, though this is the principal and primary end, it is not the only one: there are others, such as the satisfaction of the sex urge, and above all, the companionship between husband and wife, whereby each helps the other. This companionship has in these latter days received a great development at the hands of some Catholic theologians and of non-Catholic writers. Many have tended so to exaggerate its importance as to regard it even as the primary end of marriage, relegating the procreation of children to a secondary place. The implications of this are obvious. If the primary purpose of marriage is the companionship of husband and wife, or the development of their personalities, with the procreation of children occupying only the second place, as an effect attached by Nature to the expression of mutual love, it is not easy to see why it should be wrong, from this standpoint at least, so to control the exercise of the marriage act as to ensure that this "secondary" end or effect, i.e., the procreation of children, is not in fact attained. Or at least, there would seem to be no satisfactory reason why the intention of those who marry, and still more of those who perform the sexual act, should not be primarily the expression of their mutual love, or the satisfaction of their sexual instincts, to the exclusion of any other end such as the procreation of children. And this is precisely the attitude taken up towards marriage and the sex act by very many non-Catholics.

So far as Catholics are concerned, it has been thought that some support for this view can be derived, both from the Catechism of the Council of Trent., and from the Encyclical of Pius XI on Christian Marriage.

According to the Tridentine Catechism,

"The reasons because of which man and woman ought to be joined in marriage are to be explained"

by the pastor to the faithful.

"The first is precisely the companionship sought by the natural instinct of different sex, and brought about in the hope of mutual aid, so that each may help the other to bear more easily the

avoid fornication.... Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other." This is a correct and orthodox statement of the ends of matrimony. Unfortunately, it has been omitted from the alternative form in the revised Book of Common Prayer. Its omission is significant for there is a strong Anglican movement against the traditional and orthodox view of the primary end of marriage, and this has resulted in the Resolution of the Lambeth Conference of 1930 authorising artificial birth control under certain circumstances, or at least refusing to condemn it.

troubles of life, and to support the weakness of old age. The second is the desire of having children.”¹

Again, in his Encyclical on Christian Marriage Pius XI says that the

“mutual interior formation of husband and wife, this persevering endeavour to bring each other to the state of perfection, may in a true sense be called, as the Roman Catechism calls it, the primary cause and reason of matrimony, so long as marriage is considered, not in its stricter sense, as the institution destined for the procreation and education of children, but in the wider sense as a complete and intimate life-partnership and association.”²

To understand this, we must point out that the Pope is here speaking of the “action in the home” which is the manifestation of the “special kind of love” which unites husband and wife, “since true love manifests itself in works”. “This action in the home is not confined to mutual help; it must have as its higher and indeed as its chief objective that of shaping and perfecting the interior life of husband and wife.”³

But all this does not change the fact that the procreation of children is the primary and principal end of matrimony, as a divine institution, and that the other ends are subordinated to this primary end, or at least presuppose it. After all, the companionship of husband and wife, and the mutual sharing of the tasks of life, is the companionship, not just of a man and a woman, but precisely companionship between husband and wife joined together in the marital relationship, and fitting them to become in due course father and mother to the fruits of their love. And even the spiritual perfection of the parents which, as Pius XI says, may be said to be in one sense the primary cause and reason of matrimony, is not altogether unrelated to the generation of offspring, for husband and wife attain to the spiritual perfection characteristic of married persons precisely by becoming parents.

Much confusion has resulted here from a failure to distinguish between what theologians call the *finis operis*, or end of a thing viewed in itself, and the *finis operantis*, or aim consciously intended by the person performing some act. That these are not necessarily identical will be obvious to those who reflect that, while the end of

¹ “Sed quibus de causis vir et mulier conjungi debeant, explicandum est. Prima igitur est haec ipsa diversi sexus naturae instinctu expetita societas, mutui auxilii spe conciliata, ut alter alterius ope adjutus, vitae incommoda facilius ferre, et senectutis imbecillitatem sustentare queat. Altera est procreationis appetitus. . . .” (II, 8, 13).

² C.T.S. edn., p. 14.

³ Ibid., p. 13.

almsgiving viewed in itself is the relief of the poor, this may not be the aim chiefly in view in those who subscribe to charitable appeals. Similarly, the aim of those who marry, or who perform the marriage act, may not be precisely what Nature and reason show to be the primary end of marriage and of the sex act, i.e., the procreation of children: they may have some other aim. We will discuss later what theology has to say on this subject.

There are two further points which must be borne in mind. One is that the ability to distinguish between the *finis operis* and the *finis operantis* constitutes in itself one great and fundamental difference between man and the other animals. Indeed, there is good reason to think that animals are quite unable to distinguish at all between means and ends, or to will means for ends of any kind. They are guided by their instincts, and we may reasonably urge that the end aimed at by these instincts is precisely the *finis operis*, or natural end of the instinct viewed in itself. But the animal does not know this. Man, on the contrary, is able to distinguish between means and ends. He is able to determine by reason and reflection what ends in fact pertain to certain acts. In other words, he can become aware of the *finis operis* of an act, and thus become conscious of the fact that the generation of offspring is the *finis operis* of the sexual act as such.¹

But, while man can, by reason and reflection, become aware of this *finis operis*, it by no means follows that he will always make the necessary reflection. Experience shows that it is quite possible for uninstructed people to indulge in the sex act in ignorance of its natural consequences, and this may constitute the substratum of fact in the often repeated allegation that the Trobriand Islanders and other similar primitive races are ignorant of the nature of paternity.² This is all the more possible in that the effect of the sex act is not fully evident until some time has elapsed, and hence uninstructed folk may, for a time, be ignorant that the birth of a child is the *finis operis* of the sexual act performed some nine months previously. Those who are thus ignorant will of necessity have some other end in view as the *finis operantis* when performing the sex act, and this *finis operantis* may well be the satisfaction of the sex urge, or the expression of mutual love. And even those who realise that the *finis operis* of the sex act is the generation of offspring may themselves act at least partly for other motives such as those just mentioned.

All these facts have made it necessary to determine clearly the

¹ The generation of offspring is thus the primary end both of marriage itself and of the matrimonial act. Cf. pp. 170, 172.

² The truth of the allegation is not accepted by all. It is not impossible that the islanders were deceiving the anthropologists. See the pertinent remarks of G. E. Newsom in *The New Morality*, ch. vi.

relation between the various ends of marriage, and the cognate question as to the motives which may lead to the performance of the sex act. The first point, the relation between the various ends in marriage, was determined once for all by Canon 1013 of the new Code of Canon Law. This states that the primary end of marriage is the procreation and upbringing of children, and the secondary end is two-fold: mutual help, and the abating of concupiscence. But the significance of this Canon was not realised by all, and in 1944 the Holy Office found it necessary to issue a very important Decree precisely on this subject.

This Decree begins by explaining that in recent times some writers have asserted, either that the primary end of marriage is not the procreation of children, or else that the secondary ends of marriage are not subordinated to the primary end but are independent of it. Some writers have said that the primary end is the sharing in common life, or personal perfection, or the cherishing and perfecting of mutual love by the mental and physical giving of one's own person to the other, and so on. The Holy Office then proceeds to formulate the following Question or Dubium:

“Can we admit the opinion of some recent writers, who either deny that the primary end of marriage is the generation and upbringing of children, or else teach that the secondary ends are not essentially subordinate to the primary end, but are in fact equally primary and independent?”

The answer given is: “No.”¹

This decision of the Holy Office is best interpreted in the light of another authoritative document published subsequently, but which actually antedated the pronouncement of the Holy Office. This other document is an explanation of the ends of matrimony given in a judgment by the Sacred Roman Rota in January 1944. Two years before that. Pope Pius XII had, in an Allocution to the judges of the Roman Rota, uttered a warning against two extreme tendencies in this matter:

“Two tendencies are to be avoided: first, the tendency which, in examining the elements which constitute the act of generation, considers only the primary purpose of matrimony, as though the secondary purpose did not exist, or at any rate were not a *finis operis* established by the Creator of Nature itself; and secondly,

¹ “An admitti possit quorundam recentiorum sententia qui vel negant finem primarium matrimonii esse prolis generationem et educationem, vel docent fines secundarios fini primario non esse essentialiter subordinatos, sed esse aequae principales et independentes? Negative.”

the tendency to regard the secondary purpose as equally important, and to divorce it from its essential subordination to the primary purpose. . . . In other words, if truth stands in the middle, two excesses are to be avoided: on the one hand, practically to deny or unduly to depreciate the secondary purpose of matrimony and of the act of generation; on the other, to dissociate or separate unduly the conjugal act from the primary purpose for which, by the whole of its intrinsic structure, it is primarily and principally intended.”¹

The necessity for the Pope’s warning, that the secondary purpose must not be ignored or unduly depreciated, will be understood by those familiar with the works of some modern moral theologians on the subject of marriage. Thus, Gury, while saying that it is commonly admitted that there are four ends which render the marriage act lawful, namely, generation, the rendering of the debt, the avoiding of incontinence, and the cherishing of mutual love, adds that “some do not admit the last two ends.” Again, Noldin, who actually says that God attached sexual pleasure to the conjugal act in order to draw man to a thing which is in itself filthy,² finds only two ends attained by the conjugal act itself, namely the generation of new individuals, and the abating of concupiscence. He says absolutely nothing here of any fostering of mutual love of husband and wife, though of course he allows that “mutual help” is a secondary end of marriage itself (as distinct from the sex act). Again, Lehmkuhl says that the “internal and essential end of matrimony is directed to the propagation of the human race, while the secondary end is the remedying of concupiscence”. He knows no other secondary end! Small wonder, then, that some modern writers such as Dorns have been tempted to exaggerate the importance of the other secondary end envisaged in the Code of Canon Law, namely, the “mutual help” of husband and wife, and have even elevated it into a primary end. The Pope says we must not do that, but equally we must not neglect or unduly depreciate this very real secondary end, which belongs to matrimony as instituted by the Creator.

Fortified by this Papal advice, the Judges of the Roman Rota, in their formal judgment in January 1944, expressed themselves as follows³:

¹ This Papal Allocution will be found in *Clergy Review*, Feb., 1942, pp. 84-87, in an English version.

² “Ut hominem alliceret ad rem in se foedam”—*Summa Theologiae Moralis*, Compl. Prim. De sexto praecepto, 1923, pp. 8-9. This phrase has been withdrawn from editions subsequent to 1923.

³ Full Latin text in *Clergy Review*, March 1943, pp. 128-136.

“There are several ends of marriage, and one of these is primary, and the others are secondary. As Canon 1013 states, the primary end is the procreation and upbringing of children, the secondary end is mutual help, and the remedying of concupiscence.”

The Rota then proceeds to explain the difference between the *finis operis* of marriage, which is “that good thing towards the obtaining of which matrimony tends of its very nature, which nature God the Creator placed in the institution of matrimony”, and the *finis operantis*, which will be “that good towards the obtaining of which the will of the contracting party tends.”

The Rota judges then remark that;

“It is clear that the *finis operantis* can coincide with the *finis operis*: indeed. Pope Pius XI expressly urges those who contract matrimony to ‘seek in matrimony those ends for which it was instituted, by God,’ and the Roman Catechism, when dealing with the reasons which impel men to contract marriage, puts in the first place one of the *fines operis*. . . . Nevertheless, the *finis operis* and the *finis operantis* do not always coincide. For it may happen that the *finis operantis* may be altogether outside or apart from the *finis operis*, as would be the case in a man marrying in order to acquire wealth. . . . Again, the *finis operantis* may even be contrary to the *finis operis*, as happens when people marry for the sake of something which is repugnant to one or all the *fines operis* of marriage.”

Then the Rota explains the nature of the *finis operis* of marriage, as follows:

“Marriage, regarded as a natural institution, is a natural society, one and undivided, specifically distinct from any other kind of human association. Hence, its *finis operis* must similarly be natural, one and undivided, specifically proper to marriage, and distinct from any other end. Further, where there are several *fines operis* of one and the same human society, one of these must occupy the primary and principal place, and will either contain the other ends, or be such that these others are added in order that the primary end may be more easily, more safely, and more fully obtained. Accordingly, there must be a determined order in the ends of marriage, in which to the principal end, which determines the specific nature of marriage, the other *fines operis* are subordinated.

“The primary and principal *finis operis* of marriage, one and undivided, and which alone gives to marriage its specific nature, is the procreation and upbringing of children....

“No less than marriage itself, the conjugal act is likewise subordinated and governed by the primary end, in such a way that the exercise of this act is permitted only if and as long as there is verified and retained in it the essential subordination to the primary end of marriage. . . .”

Then the Rota proceeds to explain the secondary ends of marriage:

“In the Canon already cited, a twofold secondary end is assigned to marriage, namely, the ‘mutual help’ and the ‘remedying of concupiscence’. Both of these are *finis operis*, and not merely *finis operantis*.

“As to the second of these secondary ends, the ‘remedying of concupiscence’, it is easy to see that this end is, of its very nature, subordinated to the primary end, i.e., generation. For concupiscence is satisfied in and through matrimony precisely in the lawful use of the generative faculty, which is itself destined, proportioned and subordinated to the primary end of marriage. Hence the ‘satisfaction of concupiscence’ which results from the exercise of the conjugal act is, with the act itself, subordinate to the primary end of marriage.

“The other secondary end is the ‘mutual help’, which includes numerous kinds of assistance and duties, as for instance cohabitation, a common table, the use of material goods, the acquiring and administering of food, the more personal help in the various conditions of life, in mental and bodily needs, in the use of natural faculties, and also in the exercise of supernatural virtues.

“In quite recent times, some authors have explained this ‘mutual help’ in another way, connecting it with the development of personality, and contending that this perfecting of personality is, not the secondary, but the primary end. . . .

“These innovators depart from the true and certain doctrine concerning marriage, and at the same time are not able to bring forward any solid and acceptable proofs of their opinions. We will therefore set aside this doctrine of recent writers, and set forth the order and dependence between the primary and secondary ends of marriage, omitting the ‘remedying of concupiscence’ which has already been dealt with.

“There can be mutual help and a common life between two persons of different sex outside marriage, as in the case of a brother and sister, or others who explicitly agree to help one another. But the mutual help and common life which are proper to marriage, and constitute its secondary *finis operis*, must have some special property which distinguishes them from any other

sharing of life with mutual help. Now, they are so distinguished precisely by their internal relation to the primary end, which separates the marriage union from any other human association.

“This relation of the secondary to the primary end is found, in the first place, in the origin of this (secondary) end, and in the corresponding origin of the right to mutual help. This may be shown in the following manner: The immediate and essential object of the matrimonial contract is the exclusive and perpetual right over the body of one’s partner, with a view to acts which are in themselves apt for the generation of offspring (Canon 1081). From this right we get, as a natural consequence and complement, a right to all those things without which the right to generate—and consequently also to educate—children cannot be satisfied in a way which corresponds to the dignity of human nature. Now, the right to generate and educate children cannot be satisfied in the manner aforesaid unless to this principal right be added a right to mutual help, including a right to a common life or cohabitation, the sharing of bed and board, and help in all the needs of life. . . . From this it follows that the right to a common life and to mutual help arises, in those who contract marriage, only out of the primary right to generate offspring. And it also follows that there cannot be a contract of marriage dealing only with mutual help, and at the same time prescinding from the giving and accepting of rights over the body. For such a contract, giving no rights over the body, could be entered into by persons of different sex only outside matrimony.”

Later on in the same Judgment, the Rota remarks that the secondary end of marriage, though subordinated to the primary end in the way explained, enjoys a certain kind of independence, in so far as it can exist in cases where the attaining of the primary end is hindered or prevented, and also in so far as a marriage would de facto be valid if the parties gave the right to the marriage act (primary end) but not to cohabitation, etc. (secondary end). The secondary end does not constitute part of the essence of the primary end, but it is a natural consequence which flows from it.¹¹

Here, then, the developed theology of the ends of marriage and of the sex act is set forth in a way which should prevent any possibility of further misunderstanding.

¹¹ give an English version of only the main portions of the Judgment. The whole should be studied, in the Latin text.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE DEVELOPED THEOLOGY OF SEX

III. APPLICATIONS OF PRINCIPLES

There are, then, several ends, both of marriage in general, and of the conjugal act in particular. But in each case, the primary and principal end is the procreation of children. The other ends, which include mutual help, the expressing of mutual love, the rendering of the marriage debt, the abating of concupiscence, etc., are all subordinate to this primary end. Yet they enjoy a certain independence, in that, while subordinate to the primary end, of marriage and the conjugal act, they do not form part of the essence of this primary end, and can thus constitute a possible object of the human will, even when the primary end is, for some reason or other, unobtainable.

These principles have a very important bearing, both upon the question of the validity of marriage, and also the further question of the requisite intention for the lawful and moral performance of the sex act.

On the first point, the validity of marriage, the consent which constitutes the marriage of the two parties is defined in Canon Law as “the act of the will whereby each of the two parties gives and receives a perpetual and exclusive right over the body, with a view to acts which are in themselves apt for the generation of children.” It is not necessary that those who marry should know beforehand all the details of the process of generation, but it is at least necessary that they should know that marriage is a permanent association of man and woman for the procreation of children. If such realisation is absent, then the marriage is invalid. *A fortiori*, if there should be a matrimonial contract which gave only the right to mutual association, without the right to the performance of the sexual act, this again would be no marriage at all. There may be a mutual agreement to abstain from the exercise of the right—as there was in the case of the marriage between Our Lady and St. Joseph—but the right itself must be conceded if the marriage is to be valid.

We must now turn to the performance of the conjugal act itself. It is, as Pope Pius XI has urged, in every way desirable that the intention of those performing the act should in fact conform to the objective ends of the marriage act. In other words, the intention of

the spouses performing the act should be, in the first place, the procreation of children, and in the second place, and only in that place, the cherishing of mutual love and the satisfaction of sexual desire.

This is of the utmost importance. But it calls for careful consideration, if it is not to be misunderstood. Some medieval theologians, who were very severe in this matter, as were indeed many of the Fathers, would doubtless say that it is sinful to perform the sexual act for any purpose other than the procreation of children, and doubtless they would say similarly that the act is sinful if performed at a time when conception is not possible, and in particular in the period between conception and birth. We have already remarked that this attitude was probably motivated in part by the apprehension of danger to the foetus already present in the womb. But it would seem that it was also a logical inference from the principles held by these Fathers and theologians, requiring an absolute correspondence between the *finis operis* and the *finis operantis* if sin is to be avoided.

But modern theologians are not so severe. They distinguish between the positive willing of the primary end, and the absence of such a positive will. The latter admits of many degrees. The extreme opposite would be the positive will to exclude the primary end. In the case of marriage itself, such an intention would make the marriage null and void, if it were tantamount to an exclusion of the right to acts apt for generation. And it is difficult to see how one could marry with the intention of excluding the primary end, and at the same time intend to give a right to the performance of the sexual act in the proper manner. But we will return to this later.

In the case of the sex act itself, there is similarly room for many degrees between the positive willing of the primary end, and the positive exclusion of that end. Modern theologians say that the former, the positive willing of the primary end, is not necessary, and in this they hold a view which differs from that of medieval theologians. But they agree with those theologians and with the Fathers in asserting that the positive exclusion of the primary end would render the performance of the act sinful. Between these two extremes, there are many intermediate possibilities. Thus, it would be possible to perform the act with the intention of expressing mutual love, or in order to satisfy one's sexual urge, or for the sake of the pleasure attached, and these psychological motives might not in fact imply either the positive willing or the positive exclusion of the objective primary end. What is to be said of the performance of the sex act in these various circumstances?

All agree that the performance of the sex act when the primary

purpose of the act is likewise the primary intention of the will, is good and lawful.

Modern theologians, in contrast to medieval ones, teach that the sex act is lawful and good if performed for one of the recognised secondary ends, such as the expressing of mutual love, the abating of concupiscence, the rendering of the marriage debt, etc., provided the primary end of the act is not positively excluded by the performers. It need not be positively willed. But the positive exclusion of the primary end makes the performance of the act sinful. We shall return to this matter when explaining the Church's position on the matter of birth control.

We must now pass on, in the next chapter, to a consideration of the morality of the sex act performed solely for the sake of the sexual pleasure attached to it. Is the act then sinful, or not?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE DEVELOPED THEORY OF SEX

IV. THE PLACE OF SEX PLEASURE AND PASSION

This question, i.e., the morality of the sex act performed for the sake of the pleasure attached, has been the subject of much theological discussion in the course of the Church's history. The almost universal opinion in the past was that such a performance of the sexual act could not be otherwise than sinful. And certainly, if the primary end of the act were definitely excluded thereby, it would seem clear that there must be some sin, for this would involve a manifest perversion of the Divinely established order of things. For it seems evident that the pleasure inherent in the sex act has been ordained by the Creator, first to attract us to the performance of the act, and secondly to be, as it were, a reward for its performance. But the essential and intrinsic end of the act, i.e., the procreation of children, still remains the ontological end of the act. It may indeed be argued that animals, which have no perception of ontological ends, or even of ends at all, are motivated only by the pleasure attached to the sex act. But human beings are able to know the ontological end of the act, and should perform the act for that ontological end. Human beings are able to realise the function of the pleasure attached to the act, which is, as we have said, to attract towards the act, and to reward its performance. But to perform the act solely for the sake of the pleasure and not in any way for the ontological purpose of the act would obviously be to act in a merely animal and not in a human way, and further, to act contrary to the divinely established order of things, so far as man is concerned.

It is, therefore, not surprising that, as Father Davis points out, "St. Augustine clearly states that intercourse for the sake of allaying concupiscence is a venial sin," that "St. Jerome implies the same," and that "St. Gregory the Great implies that the married exceed conjugal rights when they have intercourse for pleasure."¹ St. Thomas Aquinas similarly asserts that the sex act always involves sin unless it is performed for the sake of procreation or of rendering the marriage debt.² A similar view was put forth in the eighteenth

¹ Moral Principles, pp. 214-215.

² Summa Theologica, III, Suppl., q. 49, art. 5: "Quando conjuges conveniunt causa prolis procreandae, vel ut sibi invicem debitum reddant . . . totaliter excusantur a peccato . . . alias autem semper est ibi peccatum, ad minus veniale."

century by Amort, in his *Moral Theology* and he asserts that this was then almost the universal opinion.

There were, indeed, some theologians who denied this doctrine, and who even asserted that one could perform the sex act solely for pleasure, without committing sin. This lax view was, however, expressly condemned by Pope Innocent XI in 1679. The proposition condemned was to the effect that "the conjugal act, performed solely for the sake of its pleasure, is wholly free from fault and venial defect." Its condemnation has made it certain that to perform the sex act solely for the sake of the pleasure attached is at least venially sinful. Even so, theologians have held and still hold that it is quite lawful to perform the act partly and even mainly for the sake of the pleasure attached, so far as the explicit motives are concerned, provided the ontological end of the act itself is not excluded from the intention. For, they argue, in these circumstances one may reasonably hold that the ontological end of the act is intended virtually or implicitly, especially when the act is performed in the proper manner.

Obviously, to seek only sensual pleasure in the performance of the act is to act in a merely animal way, and against the divinely established order of things. Doubtless this has led some moral theologians to adopt a very severe view on this matter. But moderation is desirable here, as in other things, and a moment's reflection will show that, as the subduing of concupiscence by the satisfaction of sexual desire is, since the Fall, one of the divinely ordained ends of the sex act, it cannot be wrong or unlawful to perform the act partly for this reason. Indeed, as this is one of the secondary and subordinate ends, it should be included in the intention of those performing the sex act, for only in that way will there be a complete correspondence between the *finis operis* ordained by God and the *finis operantis* in the performer. In this connection we must also recall St. Thomas's teaching concerning the vice of insensibility,¹ and make sure we do nothing to countenance or excuse it.

The question of the morality of the sex act has doubtless been affected by the fact that the sexual passion is often so strong as to suspend the activity of reason and will, at least for the time being. It was this consideration which prompted the Fathers and theologians, especially in the Middle Ages, to assert that the act itself is indecent. As St. Augustine said, *indecent quia inobediens est*.²

Similarly, St. Thomas Aquinas made the following statements:

"Animals lack reason. Hence in the sex act man becomes like

¹ See pp. 8-9.

² This matter will be further discussed in the chapter on the Sense of Shame.

the animals because the pleasure of the act and the fervour of concupiscence cannot be moderated by reason.”¹

“The turpitude of the concupiscence which always accompanies the sex act is not a turpitude of fault, but one of penalty, arising from the original sin, in that the inferior powers and members of the body do not obey reason.”²

But there are some other important points which must be borne in mind here. One is that, as St. Thomas himself remarks, it is quite lawful to busy oneself about some things which make one unworthy of being actually joined to God through contemplation:

“We are joined to God, both by the habit of grace, and by the act of contemplation and love. That which prevents the first kind of union is always sinful, but that which prevents the second kind is not always sinful, for there are certain lawful occupations concerning inferior matters which distract the soul and make it unworthy of being joined actually to God, and this is especially the case with the sex act, in which the mind is held because of the intense pleasure.. For this reason, those to whom it belongs to contemplate divine things, or to perform sacred functions, are instructed to abstain from their wives at that time.”³

Again, St. Thomas, when pointing out in a passage which has been quoted 'at length in a previous chapter, that in the state of innocence, everything would have been moderated by reason, adds that this would not have meant that there would have been less sex pleasure: in point of fact, there would have been more.⁴

And again, dealing with the objection that the excess of passion corrupts virtue, and that this is the case with the marriage act, St. Thomas answers that “the excess of passion which corrupts virtue is one which not only hinders or prevents the exercise of reason, but

¹ Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 3: “Bestiae carent ratione. Unde secundum hoc homo in coitu bestialis efficitur, quia delectationem coitus et fervorem concupiscentiae ratione moderari non potest.”

² Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 41, art. 3, ad. 3: “Turpitudine ilia concupiscentiae, quae actum matrimonialem semper concomitatur, non est turpitudine culpaе, sed poenae, ex peccato primo proveniens, ut scilicet inferiores vires et membra corporis rationi non obediant.”

³ Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 41, art. 3, ad. 2: “Deo conjungimur et secundum habitum gratiae, et secundum actum contemplationis et amoris. Quod ergo primum conjunctionem separat, semper est peccatum; non semper autem quod secundam; quia aliqua occupatio Ucita circa res inferiores animum distrahit ut actu Deo conjungi non sit idoneus, et hoc praecipue accidit in camali conjunctione, in qua detinetur mens propter delectationem intensam. Et propter hoc, illis quibus competit divina contemplari, aut sacra tractare, indicitur pro tempore illo abstinencia ab uxoris.”

⁴ Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 3, quoted on p. 18.

also destroys the rational order. But this is not the effect of the intensity of the delight in the marriage act, for although man is not then under control, yet he has been controlled and directed beforehand by reason.”¹

Again, answering a similar difficulty elsewhere, St. Thomas says that “the excess of passion which constitutes a vice is not to be estimated according to its quantitative intensity, but according to its proportion to reason. Hence, passion is reckoned immoderate only when it exceeds the bounds of reason. Now, the pleasure which is in the marriage act, though most intense in quantity, does not exceed the limits laid down by reason beforehand, even though in the moment of the pleasure itself, reason cannot control or determine those limits.”²

This last statement is of the utmost importance, especially if we take it in conjunction with a doctrine laid down by St. Thomas, and accepted by all theologians since his time that, while a passion which precedes an act diminishes its voluntary character, and therefore also diminishes its moral goodness, concomitant or consequent passion, which either accompanies an act or follows it, increases its voluntary character, and therefore its moral goodness (or, of course, its moral badness in the case of a bad action).³

Joining together all these strands of St. Thomas’s teaching, we can assert without hesitation that there is a very important place to be allotted to passion and pleasure in the sex act. Both passion and pleasure are natural concomitants of the sex act, and so far from

¹ Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 41, art. 3, ad. 6: “Superfluitas passionis quae virtutem corrumpit, non solum impedit rationis actum sed etiam tollit rationis ordinem: quod non facit delectationis intensio in actu matrimoniali, quia etsi tunc non ordinetur homo, tamen a ratione est praeordinatus.”

² Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 49, art. 4, ad. 3: “Superabundantia passionis quae facit vitium non attenditur secundam quantitativam ipsius intensionem, sed secundum proportionem ipsius ad rationem. Unde tunc solum passio reputatur immoderata, quando limites rationis excedit. Delectatio autem quae fit in actu matrimoniali, quamvis sit intensissima secundum quantitatem, non tamen excedit limites sibi a ratione praefixos ante principium suum, quamvis in ipsa delectatione ratio eos ordinare non possit.”

³ Summa Theologica, Ia IIae, q. 24, art. 3, ad. 1: “Passiones animae dupliciter se possunt habere ad iudicium rationis: uno modo antecedenter; et sic, cum obnubilent iudicium rationis, ex quo dependet bonitas moralis actus, diminuunt actus bonitatem. Laudabilius enim est quod ex iudicio rationis aliquis faciat opus charitatis quam ex sola passione misericordiae. Alio modo se habent consequenter, et hoc dupliciter: uno modo per modum redundantiae, quia scilicet cum superior pars animae intense movetur in aliquid, sequitur motum ejus etiam pars inferior, et sic passio existens consequenter in appetitu sensitivo est signum intensions voluntatis, et sic indicat bonitatem moralem majorem. Alio modo per modum electionis, quando scilicet homo ex iudicio rationis eligit affici aliqua passione ut promptius operetur, cooperante appetitu sensitivo; et sic passio animae addit ad bonitatem actionis.” Cf. Quaest. Disp. De Veritate, q. 26, art. 7: “Secundum quod passiones sunt praecedentes voluntatem, sic diminuunt de ratione laudabilis. . . . Secundum vero quod consequuntur ad voluntatem, sic non diminuunt laudem actus vel bonitatem . . . sed magis addunt ad bonitatem actus.” Cf. also Quaest. Disp. De Malo, q. 3, art. 11.

diminishing its moral goodness, if the sex act is willed beforehand according to right reason, the effect of pleasure and passion is simply to heighten and increase the moral goodness of the act, not in any way to diminish it. St. Thomas himself does not seem to say this anywhere expressly, but it nevertheless follows plainly and definitely from his principles, and accordingly, we ourselves have no hesitation in drawing the inference, and in making this statement. The only thing which is wrong is to be so overcome by antecedent passion or by sex desire as deliberately to perform the act contrary to right reason, or deliberately to exclude the primary and ontological end of the act, i.e., its essential ordination to the procreation of children, or its secondary ends such as the cherishing of mutual love. But if the sex act is prepared beforehand, and deliberately willed in accordance with right reason and for the right ends, in the manner explained, then surely one is entitled to give full scope to the passion which accompanies the performance of the sex act, and to take full and proper delight in the pleasure which has been attached to it by God's institution, and which is His reward for the work done by human beings acting as His instruments in the propagation of the race.

It may be asked how this can be reconciled with the doctrine which St. Thomas Aquinas adopts from Augustine, that as a result of the Fall of Man there is a certain "deformity" in the sexual act, consisting in the "immoderate concupiscence" which accompanies it (cf. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 98, art. 2, quoted on p. 18); and again, that in coitus man becomes like the animals because the pleasure and heat of concupiscence cannot be moderated by reason (*ibid.*, ad., quoted p. 177); also, that there is one evil which always accompanies coitus, namely, the lack of obedience of concupiscence to reason, constituting a *malum poenae*, though not a *malum culpae* (*Summa Theologica*, III, Suppl., q. 49, art. 4, ad. 2); and that accordingly there is always some turpitude in the sex act which makes one blush (*ibid.*, ad. 4).

In reply, unless one is to say that St. Thomas was inconsistent with himself—and we do not feel inclined to allow this—we suggest that the explanation is to be sought in the strength of irrational sex desire, and hence also of the antecedent passion which precede and indeed normally lead up to the act. It is this uncontrolled desire and this antecedent passion which is the effect of the Fall, not the existence of passion accompanying the act, or the pleasure attached to it. Further, it is arguable that in the state of innocence, the sex act would have been throughout under the conscious and deliberate control of reason and will. That is not the case now: reason and will must function beforehand, in setting the sex urge in motion, but

once that is done, the sex instinct does the rest, and reason and will have to recede in the background. But even in the state of innocence, concomitant passion and full sex pleasure would have been present in the act.

Hence, there doubtless is a certain deordination in the sex act as performed in man's present state, and this has resulted from the Fall. But it is a penalty resulting from Adam's sin, which lost us the gift of immunity from unbridled desire, and not a fault in Adam's descendents. Our aim should be to restore man's happy condition in the state of innocence so far as that may be possible. But as in that state concomitant passion and pleasure would have had full scope, we are in no way called upon to avoid this passion, or to refuse to enjoy this pleasure—quite the contrary.

There are other important theological aspects of marriage and the sex act which call for consideration. But these would seem on the whole to be more suitable for treatment in the Third Part of this work, which has as its subject the practice of sex life. Accordingly, we postpone till then chapters dealing with the sex act as an expression of mutual love, the religious aspect of the sex act, and the subject of birth control.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE SENSE OF SHAME

We come now to the “sense of shame”, so intimately connected with the sexual life of the human race. It is not an easy subject to discuss, and the matter is rendered very difficult, first by the existence of many rival theories on the subject, and secondly, by the fact that the terminology used varies almost from one writer to another. This is true even of Catholic authors, for we have already remarked¹ that even among Catholic theological writers, the subsidiary features of chastity are not always defined in the same way.

For ourselves, we propose to take as our basis in the first place the terminology of St. Thomas Aquinas. We will then comment on this in the light of certain principles derived from St. Augustine. Finally we will supplement these with some other considerations of our own, which it seems desirable to take into account. And with this synthetic view we will contrast the partial interpretations put forward by other schools of thought.

We begin, then, with an account of the terminology of St. Thomas. In this we have, first, the general virtue of chastity, moderating sexual activity in accordance with right reason. One particular form of this virtue is pudicitia, which governs the subsidiary aspects of chastity connected with kisses, touches and such like. St. Thomas remarks² that pudicitia comes from pudor, which signifies verecundia. But though pudicitia comes from pudor, the virtue of pudicitia is not the same as pudor. For pudor signifies verecundia, as we have said, and this, according to St. Thomas,³ is not strictly a virtue at all. It is rather a form of the passion of fear—praiseworthy certainly, but not a virtue in the strict sense, and in fact incompatible with human perfection.⁴ Throughout the present work I have taken it to be identical with or the equivalent of what is usually called the “sense of shame”. Moreover, while there is every reason why we should attribute to our first parents in the state of innocence the virtues of chastity and pudicitia, we must, with St. Thomas, exclude from them the passion of verecundia, i.e., pudor or

¹ See p. io.

² *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. **ijj**, art. 4.

³ *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 144, art. 1.

* *Ibid.*

the sense of shame. Hence Adam and Eve are said in Scripture to have been “naked, but not ashamed”.

On the other hand, after their sin, Adam and Eve became conscious of their nudity, and ashamed of it. This, as we have seen, was because they then began to experience the rebellious nature of the sex instinct, which had hitherto been confined within the limits of right reason. From now on it had to be controlled by a conscious effort of the will.

Historically, then, the existence of *verecmdia*, *pudor*, or the sense of shame, is a result of the loss of the preternatural gift of immunity from concupiscence. That loss reduced man to the state in which he would have been had he not been endowed with the preternatural gifts. From this it follows that, although it did not exist in unfallen man, *verecmdia*, *pudor*, or the sense of shame is nevertheless to some extent a natural characteristic of human nature as such. It was rendered unnecessary in the state of innocence by the presence of the preternatural gift of immunity from concupiscence.

Viewed as natural to man, the “sense of shame” would not be at all a “sense of guilt”, for it would be present apart from actual sin. It would rather consist in the experience of the difficulty of controlling the sex instinct and the motions of the sex organs, and the feeling of confusion and awkwardness which results from this difficulty. This “sinless” sense of shame has been, of course, heightened by the commission of actual human sin, as we shall explain later, for human sin has in fact increased the difficulty of controlling the sex appetites.

While natural to man, in the sense explained, the sense of shame would seem not to be possessed by man in common with other animals, but indeed to be peculiar to the human race. For the sex appetites of animals are controlled by their instincts. In man alone does the sex appetite exist in an uncontrolled state, and in man alone it has to be controlled by a conscious effort of will.¹ The realisation of its uncontrolled state and of the need of this conscious effort of will is expressed precisely in *verecmdia* or the sense of shame. All this seems to be a reasonable and legitimate interpretation of the teaching of St. Thomas, especially as laid down in *Ila Ilae*, q. 144, and q. 151, art. 4, which the student should consult for further details.

We must emphasise once more that, as we have said, there would

¹ There may, however, be in some animals a certain psychological factor analogous to the sense of shame. See p. 191. For a discussion of alleged instances of modesty or shame among animals, see *Modesty*, by J. de la Vaissiere, S.J., English translation by S. A. Raemers, pp. 72-73. (All our references are to this English translation.) He says that “what some writers have put down as modesty in animals is probably nothing more than special tendencies such as fear, defence or the like, which manifest themselves in the exercise of the sex instinct.” A similar explanation of the human sense of shame is discussed later on in the present chapter.

have been a certain "sense of shame" in the purely natural state of man, had such existed, and hence it would not be correct to say that this "sense of shame" is 'wholly due to the Fall of Man and to the fact of sin. Yet it was absent from the state of innocence, for reasons explained elsewhere. But it became a reality in man because of the sin of our first parents, and that sin has been followed by innumerable others, and this prevalence of sin has given an entirely new force and meaning to *verecundia* or the sense of shame. For we ourselves have to blush, not merely out of fear of the possibility of evil, particularly of a sexual character, but also because the human race has in fact committed sexual sin freely, and displays a decided weakness in this regard, and all this has led to the introduction of a guilty element into the sense of shame.¹

This twofold aspect of the sense of shame, i.e., the fact that it belongs to human nature as such, and the further fact that it has been heightened and to some extent modified by the existence of sin, will lead to very important consequences. We see already that, in discussing the subject, we must carefully distinguish between what is natural to man as such, and what is *de facto* characteristic of sinful man.

We must briefly consider another closely related feature in man, which St. Thomas Aquinas calls "modesty", reserving a more detailed study for the next chapter. St. Thomas defines *modestas* as a subdivision of temperance, the virtue which moderates passions in general, and the more vehement passions in particular. *Modestas* in his system is a subsidiary virtue which moderates the less active passions.² By extension, it also regulates such matters of external conduct as walk, dress, etc. In this way it is connected with the virtue of chastity or *pudicitia* as a sort of outpost. It is, perhaps, less directly connected with *verecundia* or the sense of shame, but of course the fear of anything disordered in sexual matters will lead to the exercise of temperance or *modestas* in attire, etc.

Just as *verecundia* or the sense of shame has acquired a new meaning and intensity through human sin, so also the virtue of modesty has doubtless received thereby a further extension. The more man sins, the more numerous become the occasions of sin, and hence it is ever more incumbent on him to avoid things which may be in themselves innocent or harmless, but have become dangerous to

¹ Cf. *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 144, art. 2. Pere de la Vaissiere remarks on the "equivocal" character of the word "shame", which may "designate either good or bad shame" (op. cit., p. 2).

² See Sertillanges, *Morale de S. Thomas*, pp. 486-488, and references there given. It is rather regrettable that the English translation of Pere de la Vaissiere's book. *La Pudeur*, has been given the title *Modesty*. This tends to identify the virtue of modesty with the sense of shame, and adds to the existing confusion in terminology.

him precisely because they are, to him, real or likely occasions of sin.

Modesty, then, and the sense of shame, while both in a sense natural to man, have been given a much wider extension through the sin of man. The less a human being is liable to sin, the less intense will be the sense of shame, and the virtue of modesty will be less extensive in matters of detail.¹ This already prepares us for some remarkable facts which we shall consider later, and which indicate variations in the extent and character of modesty and the sense of shame in the human race.

Reserving the special study of modesty for the next chapter, we can now concentrate on the sense of shame. The variations in this matter are of course not the only variations which call for explanation. There have been even more fundamental variations in moral standards in the course of human history, and these variations have involved a temporary obliteration of secondary precepts of the natural or moral law, as St. Thomas expressly allows.² In view of this it would hardly call for surprise that there should exist some tribes, either in the past or present, which display little sense of shame even as to acts which we, with our more developed moral code, realise to be sinful. Variations in moral ideas are naturally accompanied by variations in the applications and expressions of the virtue of chastity, etc., and would therefore lead to corresponding variations in the sense of shame.

Even so, we should beware of thinking that every departure in others from our own standards of *verecundia* necessarily indicate sinful conduct in them. And in particular, we must bear in mind the variations which naturally result from differing stages of culture, conditions of climate, etc. It may well be that some things which are obviously contrary to our own standards are due rather to a greater innocence and absence of sin in certain tribes. And if and when this is the case, we ought surely to beware of insisting upon our own more elaborate practices in the matter, lest we should suggest to these comparatively innocent souls the possibility of sin where none has hitherto existed.

On the other hand, we ought obviously to be equally prudent in encouraging or tolerating departures from accepted standards governing our own state of society. We must here avoid two extremes. We must not expect that our own particular standard will be the one for all people at all times, and certainly not that it will remain sacrosanct in all its details. But on the other hand, we must beware of encouraging too sudden a departure from such standards.

¹ But consideration for the weakness of others will be dictated by the virtue of charity. See below pp. 206-207.

² See p. 67.

But these considerations belong rather to the consideration of modesty, in the next chapter.

It is important, however, to note with Dr. Ruland that the primitives in the central parts of South America, Africa, the East Indies and the islands around Australia, who live "without any clothing whatsoever", nevertheless "possess a well-developed sense of shame, thus giving convincing proof of the universality of this sense among mankind. In the hard struggle for existence which is forced upon these people by their primitive condition, the mere sight of the nude body is not enough to cause sexual excitement. . . . The important fact is that among these peoples, the exercise of the sex instinct occurs in absolute privacy, and is an entirely personal matter removed from observation."¹

Dr. Ruland then proceeds to distinguish between "a local and a functional sense of shame." He writes: "The exercise of the sex instinct, and every development leading up to it, is protected and safeguarded by the sense of shame." But if and when "the natural resistance against the stimulation of the sex instinct is lowered through cultural advancement, man is forced to obviate this danger by covering his body with clothes. The sense of shame now demands not only a concealment of the function but of parts of the body as well, either of the sex organs only, or of other parts also."

Dr. Ruland's contention that the sense of shame in these primitive people affects only the exercise of the sex instinct, and not the sex organs, is a most illuminating one, and it suggests some interesting lines of thought. It at least suggests that the covering of the sex organs, to which we ourselves attach so much importance, is not regarded as essential or desirable by these primitive folk, who are nevertheless comparatively chaste, and have a well-developed "sense of shame" so far as the exercise of the sex instinct is concerned.

We must note here that the "sense of shame" referred to as present in these primitive races might be better described as a "sense of privacy", for it does not seem to be accompanied by any notion that the sex act is wrong or sinful, when performed by husband and wife. We shall have to go further, and seek an explanation of this "sense of privacy". That we try to elucidate later.

Here we can conveniently introduce the traditional Christian explanation of the sense of shame, first formulated by St. Augustine. We have already explained that, in traditional Christian theology, the result of man's rebellion against God was the withdrawal of the preternatural gift of immunity from concupiscence, and the resulting rebellion of the lower appetites against the immediate control by the reason. Now, according to St. Augustine and Catholic theolo-

¹ Pastoral Medicine, p. 258.

gians generally, it is precisely this unruly character, manifested above all by the sex instinct and the sex organs, that explains the “sense of shame”.

Thus, St. Augustine writes as follows in his *De Civitate Dei*:

“As to copulation in marriage which, according to the laws of matrimony, must be used for propagation’s sake: does it not seek a corner for its performance, though it be honest and lawful? Does not the bridegroom turn all the servants, and even the bridesmaids and all others out of his chamber, before he begins to embrace his bride? As the great author of Roman eloquence has said, whereas all honest deeds desire the light, that is, love to be known, this only desires so to be known that it blushes to be seen. For who does not know what the married couple must do to beget a child, seeing the wife is solemnly married to the man for this very end? Yet, when that is done from which children are born, the children themselves, if any exist already, must not be witnesses. For this act desires indeed to be seen by the mind, yet it seeks to escape from the sight of the eye. Now what can be the reason for this, unless it be that this lawful act of nature is accompanied with a penalty of shame, from our first parents. . . .

“Whereas shame does not hide wrath, or other emotions, in their immoderate acts, as it seeks to hide the -works of the sex function, what is the reason for this? It is because it is not the emotion but the will that moves the other members when they perform the acts of those emotions. . . . But the members of generation are, in a sense, so much under the control of the sex urge that they cannot move if this be absent, nor stir unless the sex urge; aroused either voluntarily or forcibly, moves them. This is the cause of that shame and the avoiding of beholders of this act: this is the reason why a man would not mind being seen by a multitude when he is overcome by anger in regard to his neighbour, but would not like a single person to behold him when he is lawfully in carnal copulation with his wife.” (Lib. XIV, caps. 18 and 19.

St. Augustine deals with the same matter elsewhere, and we can suitably sum up his theory in the phrase: *indecent est quia inobediens est*.¹

Now, if what St. Augustine says is true, we ought surely to be able to urge that the sexual act is “*indecent in quantum inobediens est*”. In other words, if the sexual instinct were completely obedient to reason, there would be no indecency or shame attached to it. And

¹ Here are other references to St. Augustine: *De Nuptiis et concupiscentia*, I, 7, (Migne, P.L., Vol. XLIV, col. 418; *Contra Julianum*, IV, 62, Migne, *ibid.*, col. 768.

this was obviously the state of man before the Fall, when our first parents were "naked, but not ashamed".

Would this absence of shame rule out all privacy in the exercise of the sexual function? There might be good reasons for such privacy, as we shall see later. But the privacy would certainly not be motivated in the state of innocence by any disobedience in the sexual members. And in any case, in virtue of the principles of St. Augustine himself, the sexual act would certainly not be indecent in those conditions.

Can we now go a step further, and suggest that, in the measure in which the sex faculty is brought under the obedience to intellect and will which was whole and complete before the Fall, there will cease to be any inherent indecency in either the faculty or its organs even to-day? That is a difficult and delicate question. On the one hand, we must remember that it is the defined doctrine of the Church, as explained on p. 55 of this work, that concupiscence, i.e., the lack of obedience of sense desires to the dictates of right reason, remains in the baptised, and it has been wholly absent only from Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. Even so, we must bear in mind that, as the theologian Tanquerey remarks, "the strength of concupiscence is not equal in all, as spiritual directors of souls are well aware."¹ Tanquerey goes on to quote St. Thomas, to the effect that the ardour of concupiscence varies in different people, according to their particular physical constitutions.² Next, we have the important principle, that while the Redemption achieved by Christ our Lord does not result in the restoration of the gift of integrity, i.e., immunity from concupiscence, immediately in this life, it is, as Tanquerey asserts in his *Precis de Theologie Ascétique et Mystique*, Vol. I, p. 53, given back to us gradually or by degrees ("progressivement"). He adds that "In the measure in which we engage in the spiritual combat, under the guidance and with the help of Christ, concupiscence diminishes,³ our powers of resistance increase, and the moment comes when some privileged souls are so established in virtue that, while of course they remain quite free to sin, they do not commit any deliberate venial fault" (Joe. cit.). We must add to this the important truth that, as the same theologian writes in his treatise *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*, the reception of Holy Communion

¹ De Homine, in *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae*, Vol. II, p. 575, 1929 edn.

² Ibid. The reference is to *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, q. 82, art. 4, col. 1. St. Augustine teaches the same (*Contra Julianum*, Lib. VI, cap. xviii).

³ This is also the doctrine of St. Augustine. He writes thus, for instance, in *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, Lib. I, cap. xxv: "Quamvis reatu suo jam soluto (in baptismo), manet tamen, donec sanetur omnis infirmitas nostra, proficiente renovatione interioris hominis de die in diem cum exterior induerit incorruptionem. . . . Quae tamen concupiscentia quotidie minuitur in proficientibus et continentibus, accedente etiam senectute multo maxime."

“diminishes concupiscence, at least indirectly, and even, according to Suarez and other grave theologians, directly, inasmuch as the lust of the flesh is moderated, the imagination is restrained, and the passions of the sensitive appetite are brought under control” (Synopsis Theologia Dogmaticae, Vol. III, p. 628, 1930 edition).

We conclude, therefore, that there is much to be said for St. Augustine’s theory that the sex function is “indecent because inobedient”, especially if we interpret this to mean that it is “indecent in so far as it is disobedient.” This implies, as we have said, not only that in the state of innocence there would have been no indecency in the sex act or sex organs, but also that, even in the present fallen state of man, the indecency is a variable factor. Furthermore, as we have often urged, the aim of redeemed humanity should be to approximate, so far as possible, to the condition of man in the state of innocence. Given the power of sanctifying grace, so abundantly bestowed upon us through Christ our Lord—and did not St. Paul say that “where sin hath been multiplied, grace hath abounded yet more?”¹—need we regard it as unthinkable, or impossible, that in some favoured individuals at least, the sex urge should be brought so much under control as to approach, though not, of course, to reach the state of complete obedience and utter control which was found in Adam and Eve before the Fall? At least we see no reason why we should not apply the theory of St. Augustine, understood in the sense explained, and hold that the “indecency” or “sense of shame” involved in the sex act by reason of its uncontrolled nature would be reduced to a minimum. And why should this not be the case with a good Catholic husband and wife, loving each other with a truly religious as well as a truly human love, and desirous of bringing children into the world for God’s honour and glory? We see no reason why such Catholic parents should regard their sexual union as in any way “indecent”, especially if they bear in mind its religious significance as a symbol of the union between Christ and the Church, and the other religious aspects which we shall now mention.

It seems desirable to emphasise the quasi-universal recognition of this religious aspect of sex.² Briefly, we have the fact that, in the Christian religion, marriage has been hallowed and sanctified by Our Lord and raised to the rank of a Sacrament, in which the sex act itself symbolises the union between Christ and the Church. A similar symbolism, indeed, was attached to marriage under the Old Testament, for the relations between Israel and Jahveh are constantly compared there to those between a man and his wife.

¹ Romans, V. 21, Westminster Version.

² This is the subject of a special chapter in Part Three.

And again, the “spiritual” interpretation of the Cantic of Canticles—which, as we have said, need not exclude the literal interpretation—represents the love of human spouses as a symbol of the love between God and the human soul.

There are other considerations here which support and strengthen this religious character of sex. It is the teaching of St. Paul that earthly paternity is but the symbol of the Fatherhood of God. The Apostle says, indeed, that God is the ultimate type of all paternity “in heaven and in earth”. Thus, according to St. Paul, human fatherhood is a far-off image and likeness of the Divine Paternity “in heaven”. This of course refers to the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity. The Catholic Faith teaches us that there is a spiritual but nevertheless true generation within the Godhead, for the Father thus generates the Son. The Holy Ghost, who is the mutual love of Father and Son, completes the Trinity. Here we have the heavenly “Family”. Further, in the Christian religion, this heavenly Family has its counterpart on earth in the Holy Family of Nazareth, the Incarnate Son of God, together with His Mother and his foster father. All this gives a new religious character to parenthood and to the family, and therefore also to the sex function which lies at the root of both.

Again, the function of parenthood is one in which we act as God’s instruments in the work of Creation which is so peculiarly his. He creates the human soul directly and immediately, but human parents are his instruments in the creation of the human body, and hence they are truly said to “pro-create” their children, and this they do precisely by the exercise of the sex function.

Turning now from the Christian and Jewish religions to those of paganism, we have the sad fact that in many of these religions there has been a worship of special gods of fertility, and also of the sex organs themselves. This was indeed a horrible corruption, but it was precisely the corruption and degradation of an idea which is itself true, namely, that the sex function is something sacred. For it is, as St. Thomas Aquinas insists, an act of the virtue of religion, when performed in the right way and for the right motives. And Pope Pius XI also reminds us that the procreation of “fellow citizens of the Saints and members of the Household of God” is a duty incumbent upon Christian parents. That is tantamount to saying that the act of procreation for the right purposes is a religious act.

Leaving the impact of this truth upon the sex life of married people for treatment in the special chapter in Part Three devoted to the subject, we would like to point out here its bearing upon what we have described earlier in this chapter as a “sense of privacy”. The Godhead is far above us, and hence there must ever be an element of

mystery in religious worship, and indeed in all those acts whereby we approach the Infinite Deity. Now inasmuch as the sex function is an instrumental participation in God's own creative work, and a religious act in the sense we have explained, it would be itself mysterious. We have seen that, in Holy Scripture, the sacred writers do not hesitate to dwell upon this element of mystery. Further, if the sexual function be thus religious, thus mysterious, it seems only right and fitting that it should be treated with all due reverence. We would now go a step further, and urge that, traditionally, reverence and mystery have always been associated with a certain degree of concealment, or at least with a withdrawal from the ordinary acts and functions of human life. Might not this religious sense of reverence account to some extent for the privacy which man so imperiously requires for the performance of the sex act, even in cases where there is no "local" sense of shame? We would suggest that this "sense of privacy", which we would regard as the equivalent of a "sense of reverence", would have been present even in the state of innocence itself, so far as the exercise of the sex function is concerned. This would, in our opinion, be perfectly compatible with the absence of all shame, and the presence of complete nudity which characterised our first parents before the Fall.

We agree, of course, that in the present state of things, other factors are present, and it is the stressing of particular factors, to the neglect or even exclusion of others, that has given rise to so many rival theories of the origin of the sense of shame, etc. It is not impossible, for instance, that many Christian writers have dwelt too exclusively upon the *indecentia quia inobediens* of St. Augustine. Certainly, few Christian writers seem to have given anything like an adequate place to the religious factor, and the same is true of most non-Catholic theorists. But the most satisfactory theory would be one which finds a place for all elements. We suggest that the religious element might well be given greater prominence than it sometimes receives, especially when children are being exhorted to be modest, and not to display their sex organs unnecessarily. The emphasis upon the holy character of these organs, as God's instruments in the work of creation, would effectively obviate any necessity to suggest that they are dirty, indecent, unclean or unpleasant. Again, this holy character would provide an excellent basis for warning children against any misuse of their sex organs, and they would easily understand the sinfulness of any such misuse. Such instruction would also fit in quite naturally with the phraseology of the Hail Mary, with its reference to the blessedness of Mary's womb. It would also give the child a new sense of the dignity of its parents.

who were the instruments of God Himself in bringing the child into being.

There would thus be no need to suggest to children that the sex organs are in reality "shameful". We have pointed out in the course of this work that, in one text of Genesis, they are called in the Vulgate *verenda*—a term which etymologically at least implies some degree of reverence—and further, we have pointed out that, while St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians certainly calls the sex organs *aschemona*—a term which the Vulgate renders as *inhonesta*—the Apostle goes on to say that the precise purpose of clothing is to give "more abundant honour" to these parts of the body which, seemingly, lack honour in themselves. The purpose of clothing is thus not to hide something in itself indecent or impure, but to give due honour to the organs of generation.

The theory of the sense of shame we have outlined in the preceding pages, being mainly on the moral and theological plane, is, in our opinion, quite compatible with certain considerations of a biological or psychological nature which have been stressed by various authors, and indeed have been made the basis of their own particular theories concerning the sense of shame.

Thus, it has been urged that the sense of shame is a natural endowment in the human species, corresponding to shyness in the female animal prior to beginning conjugal life, and constituting a sort of brake upon the activity of the sexual instinct. This aspect of the sense of shame is, indeed, given very full scope by many modern Catholic writers on the subject. It is certainly not impossible that the sense of shame may possess this regulative and, as it were, repressive function, and that it is intended by Nature to assist the voluntary control of the sex instinct. Viewed in this light, however, it would seem to be a "sense of reserve" rather than a "sense of shame". Certainly a "sense of reserve" would fulfil the same function, and we should have to explain the origin of the indecency factor. This, of course, Catholic writers proceed to do, by introducing the fact and consequences of original sin. In any case, there remains the religious element, which does not seem to be explained by these writers.

Many non-Catholic writers, ignoring both the religious and moral aspects of the sense of shame, seem to think that the latter can be sufficiently explained by the fact that the performance of the sex act requires a posture which renders self-defence difficult in case of attack: in other words, the "sense of shame" is merely a "sense of privacy" in the interests of physical safety. But while we are prepared to make full allowance for these considerations, a theory based exclusively upon them fails to account for the religious aspect,

and still less for the moral character of sex. This criticism applies, for instance, to the particular form of the "biological" theory advocated by J. C. Flugel in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*.¹ In an essay entitled *The Biological Basis of Sexual depression*, this writer urges that the "biological factor" of this repression "consists in the existence of a necessary biological antagonism between the full development of the individual and the exercise of his procreative powers", adding in a footnote that "modesty constitutes one of the most important conscious manifestations of this inhibition". But such a theory completely ignores the moral and religious aspects of modesty, etc.

The same applies to a form of the theory put forward in 1930-1 by Mr. J. T. MacCurdy, of the Psychological Laboratory in the University of Cambridge, and published in the *British Journal of Psychology* for that year.² He put forward the "self-defence" theory, suggesting that primitive man had constantly to be on the defence against possible enemies and hostile surroundings, and that he thus instinctively came to conceal himself prior to performing any act which would preclude a rapid self-defence. The more powerful the appetite, the greater would be the potential danger, and hence the greater the need for isolation, and in this respect, the sexual urge and the need to evacuate occupy the first place. Accordingly, "savages, who are immodest in many ways according to our prejudices, never perform a sex act when they can be seen, except, rarely, at a religious rite. This is explained by the fact that in the two functions just mentioned, it is necessary to assume a posture in which speedy defence is impossible". The reference to "religious rites" is significant, and should at least suggest the possibility of this other factor intervening.

In any case, there is nothing very original in this "self-defence" theory, thus advanced in 1931 by a psychologist of the University of Cambridge. It had, in fact, already been mooted when Browning wrote his poem, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, almost a century earlier, namely in 1855. For Browning makes the bishop speak thus:

"Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
Whoso embraced a woman in the plain.
Threw club down, and forewent his brains beside,
So stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother-savage club in hand—
Hence saw the use of going out of sight

¹ *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, Vol. I., pp. 225 et seq.

² *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. XXI, pp. 174-182.

In wood or cave to prosecute his loves—
I read this in a French book t'other day."

The bishop points out that this theory fails to account for the moral aspect of sex:

"Does law so analysed coerce you much?"

And he goes on to urge that there are

"Certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out
You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
But there they are, and so you let them rule."

The theory fails also to account for the religious aspect of sex.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

MODESTY, CLOTHES AND NUDITY

There would seem to be a logical connection between the sense of shame, which has been studied in the preceding chapter, and modesty, which in our “popular” English sense of the word,¹ inculcates certain requirements in the matter of clothing, and particularly as regards the covering of the sex organs, etc. Modesty in this sense might indeed be regarded as an external manifestation and consequence of the sense of shame. It was precisely because our first parents experienced the sense of shame that they made girdles for themselves, hiding their sexual organs—an act which was subsequently confirmed by the “garments of skins” made for them by their Creator.²

But if we turn to St. Thomas’s treatment of the virtue of modesty, we shall probably be surprised to find that he has so little to say there about the need of clothing. Indeed, it is true to say that, in order to get his whole mind on the subject of clothes, we must take into consideration what he says in the *Summa Theologica*, *Ha Ilae*, q. 164, art. 2, ad. 8. In this article he is discussing, not modesty as such, but the question whether the particular penalties for the sin of our first parents are suitably enunciated in Scripture (“*utrum convenienter particulares poenae primorum parentum determinantur in Scriptura*”). The eighth objection here urges that, just as food is necessary for man, so also is clothing. Therefore, just as food is attributed to our first parents before their sin, so also clothing ought to be attributed to them. Hence it is not fitting that after their sin Scripture should say that God made them clothes of skin.³

Here is St. Thomas’s answer:

“Clothing is necessary for man in his present state of misery for two reasons. First, indeed, because of the liability of harm from outside, e.g., through extreme heat and cold; secondly, for the covering of (his) ignominy (*ad tegumentum ignominiae*)

¹ This is not the same as the traditional theological conception of “*modestia*”. See below.

² The meaning of this text has been discussed on p. 50, n. 1.

³ “*Vestitus ad necessitate hominis pertinet, sicut et cibus. . . . Ergo, sicut cibus primis parentibus fuit attributus ante peccatum, ita etiam et vestitus attribui debuit. Inconvenienter ergo post peccatum dicitur eis Deus tunicas pelliceas fecisse.*”

lest the turpitude of (those) members should appear in which especially is manifested the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit (ne turpitude membrorum appareat, in quibus praecipue manifestatur rebellio carnis ad spiritum). But these two things were not present in that first state of man, for in that state the body could not be harmed from anything outside. . . . Nor was there in that state any turpitude in the human body which could lead to confusion, Hence it is said, Genesis 11, 25, 'they were both naked, Adam, that is, and his wife, and they were not ashamed.' But food rests on a different basis, for this is necessary both in order to conserve natural heat, and also for the growth of the body."¹

We shall return to this aspect of St. Thomas's teaching later on in this chapter.

St. Thomas deals *ex professo* with the virtue of modesty in the *Summa Theologica*, *Ha Ilae*, q. 169.

We shall find, if we study carefully his treatment of this subject, that, contrary to what we might expect, modesty in his sense of the term is not directly connected with the virtue of chastity. For St. Thomas, it is a "potential part" of the cardinal virtue of temperance, i.e., an application of the virtue of temperance to a subsidiary class of acts. For, as St. Thomas explains in *Ha Ilae*, q. 160, art. 1, just as temperance moderates those things which are most difficult to control, i.e., the pleasures attached to the sense of touch, so also there is a virtue which moderates some things which are not so difficult to control, and this is precisely the virtue of modesty. Understood in this wide sense, "Modesty" admits of a division into three, or perhaps four special virtues, namely, humility, *studiositas*, which moderates our desire for knowledge, in accordance with right reason, *modestia* in words and acts, and *modestia* in externals. It is obvious that, taken in the general sense as including all these virtues, modesty is only very indirectly connected with the control of the sex appetite. Indeed, the term would seem to have that wide sense in which we in English apply it in expressions such as a "modest house", a "modest income", a "modest estimate of one's own abilities", etc.

We come somewhat closer to our subject when we arrive at the

¹ "Vestitus necessarius est homini secundum statum praesentis miseriae propter duo. Primo quidem propter defectum ab exterioribus nocementis, puta intemperati caloris et frigoris; secundo, ad tegumentum ignominiae, ne turpitude membrorum appareat in quibus praecipue manifestatur rebellio carnis ad spiritum. Haec autem duo in primo statu non erant, quia in statu illo corpus hominis non poterat per aliquod extrinsecum laedi. Nec etiam erat in statu illo aliqua turpitude in corpore hominis, quae ad confusionem induceret. Unde dicitur, Gen. ii, 25: Erat autem uterque nudus, Adam scilicet et uxor ejus, et non erubescerant. Alia autem ratio est de cibo, qui est necessarius ad fomentum caloris naturalis, et ad corporis augmentum."

specific virtue of "modesty". St. Thomas divides this into two. First we have "*Modestia, secundum quod consistit in exterioribus corporis motibus*", i.e., our external activities. These, St. Thomas says, may be either serious, or connected with games, and in each case due moderation is called for. Secondly, we have "*modestia in exteriori apparatu*", and with this we reach the point where we are closest to the virtue of chastity. Even here, however, the relation is still a somewhat loose one. Modesty in this last sense is concerned with external apparel and ornamentation ("*circa exteriorem apparatus et ornatum*," q. 159, art. 1, "*Conclusio*"). St. Thomas begins by making the pertinent remark that there can be no evil or vice in these external adjuncts themselves, but only in an immoderate use of them. He goes on: "This lack of moderation (*immoderantia*) can arise either in respect to the custom of those with whom one is living (*per comparationem ad consuetudinem hominum cum quibus aliquis vivit*), or else from an inordinate attitude of mind in the one using the things in question (*ex inordinato affectu utentis*). In connection with the first case of lack of modesty, i.e., by comparison with the custom of those with whom we happen to be living, St. Thomas quotes St. Augustine as saying that "Offences against the customs of mankind are to be avoided, according to the variety of such customs (*Quae autem contra mores hominum sunt flagitia, pro morum diversitate vitanda sunt*), so that that which is agreed upon by the people of a city or a race, and is made firm by custom or by law, should not be violated at the pleasure of any citizen or visitor; for any part not in harmony with the rest is evil (*ut pactum inter se civitatis aut gentis consuetudine vel lege firmatum nullius civis aut peregrini libidine violetur: turpis est enim omnis pars universo suo non congruens*)" (*Confessions*, Lib. III, cap. 8).

St. Thomas then proceeds to consider the immodesty which can arrive in the second way, i.e., through inordinate intent. This may manifest itself through excess (*superabundantia*), or else by defect. Immodesty by excess can happen in three ways. First by seeking glory through an inordinate cult of dress and ornaments, secondly by an inordinate seeking of bodily comfort by means of clothes, and thirdly by too much solicitude for dress. Immodesty by defect can arise in two ways: first by negligence, when one does not take sufficient care or pains about one's clothing; secondly by seeking glory through such neglect.

The first objection urges that there can be no virtue in such a variable matter as external decoration (*exterior ornatus*), seeing that it is not a matter settled by nature, but varies according to time and place, and hence St. Augustine remarks that, whereas the ancient Romans considered it an offence to wear a garment reaching to the

ankles and having long sleeves, now it is an offence for decent people to wear such clothes. In his reply, St. Thomas points out that “although this external decoration of ourselves comes not from nature itself, nevertheless it pertains to natural reason that such external decoration should be moderated, and in this way nature does intend us to possess this particular virtue, which moderates external clothing.”

The second objection urged that excess and defect of clothing cannot be wrong, for priests wear splendid vestments, and Scripture praises some who went about in sheepskins and goatskins. St. Thomas replies that those occupying positions of dignity may rightly wear more precious garments than others, provided they do this not for their own glory but to show the excellence of their office. Similarly, lugubrious clothing may be worn by those who wish to exhort others to penance.

In his second article, St. Thomas considers especially the subject of female dress and decoration. He says in general that a wife may well pay attention to her appearance in order to remain attractive to her husband.¹ He is more severe towards the unmarried, though he seems here to have in mind those who neither have nor wish to have husbands. St. Thomas seems prepared to allow the use of pigments, provided these are used to hide some defect or ugliness, rather than to produce an entirely fictitious beauty. The use of such “aids”—especially in the unmarried—could be a mortal sin if it were done for lasciviousness, or out of contempt for God and divine things.

In his answer to the third difficulty, which brings forward the divine command forbidding a woman to dress as a man and vice versa, and argues that it is therefore a mortal sin for a woman to use superfluous ornamentation, St. Thomas begins by pointing out once more that external appearance, etc., ought to conform to the condition of the person in question, according to the common custom (evidently of the time and place). It is wrong for a woman to dress as a man, and vice versa, particularly if this is done to excite lust, or again if it is connected with idol worship. But it can be done without sin either for some need, or to hide oneself from enemies, or because other clothes are lacking, or some other reason of this nature. Evidently, then, St. Thomas could not be included amongst those who condemn as sinful the use of male garb by women upon occasion—always provided there is a good reason for this.

We are not, of course, concerned here with the details of women’s dress and ornamentation. We have outlined St. Thomas’s treatment in order to give a fair presentation of his treatment of modesty in

¹ St. Thomas says in fact, “lest, despising his wife, he fall into adultery”.

the matter of clothes. It is, we think, abundantly clear that the connection between modesty in this sense and the virtue of chastity while of course real, is remote rather than close. Modesty is, so to speak, an outpost, not part of the inner guard.

What we may call the "classical" conception of modesty, as set forth by St. Thomas Aquinas, is still that found in the works of some great modern theologians.

Thus, Lehmkuhl, S.J., teaches that "Modesty in the strict sense is a virtue which moderates the external habit (=dress), doings and external actions of a man, in such a way that all things are regulated according to the prescriptions of decorum and reason. In which matter, of course, due account must be made of the person in question, the place, time, occupation, etc." (*Theologia Moralis*, Vol. I, 1910 edn., p. 485).

Similarly Prummer, O.P., defines modesty in general with Billuart, as the "virtue whereby each remains within the limits of his state, abilities and fortune in regard to his movements, internal or external, and all the administration of his things", while in the strict sense it is "the virtue inclining a man to observe decorum in external things". Still more particularly, "modesty in external things is the moral virtue inclining a man to observe decorum in externals according to right reason, these externals being movements of the body, games, vesture and bodily ornaments." (*Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, Vol. II, pp. 534, 537).

St. Thomas is of course followed also by Sertillanges, in his work on the *Morale de h. Thomas d'Aquin* (pp. 504, 527 et seq.), and his definition is also adopted by the writer of the article on *Luxe* in the *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*.

We must also stress the fact that this "classical" view of modesty is the one presented in the Catechism of the Council of Trent. As an illustration of "immodesty", this Catechism gives "an excessive display in dress or adornment" (*De sexto praecepto*).

But, just as the traditional and "classical" conception of temperance has to some extent been replaced, especially in modern England, by one which signifies almost exclusively total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, so also the original idea of "modesty" seems to have been replaced by one far more closely attached to chastity and pudicitia, and immodesty has come to signify something positively indecent. The phrases "immodest thoughts", "immodest actions", and "immodest dress" often have this special and limited sense.¹ St. Thomas's use of the term is obviously much wider. According to the Angelic Doctor, for instance, it would be immo-

¹ On the other hand, the "classical" sense is retained in the expressions such as "a modest income", "of modest ability", etc.

dest not to wear a hat, if it is the custom of the time and country to do so.

This obvious difference between the "classical" conception of "modesty" in Catholic theology, and the modern "popular" use of the term as more or less equivalent to "indecent" has one important application. For we may now inquire as to the particular sense in which "modesty" and its counterpart "immodesty" is used when it is employed in modern pronouncements by ecclesiastical authority, such as the Decree issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Council on January 12th, 1930 (see *Periodica*, 1930, p. 195), which deals with "immodest dress".¹

It is, of course, for Authority to decide this question. But in the absence of any official guidance on the matter, we are ourselves inclined to think that the ecclesiastical authorities are using "modesty" here in the "classical" sense rather than in the modern "popular" sense. The Papal and other announcements on these matters have often been ridiculed by those outside the Church, who have urged that there is really nothing "immodest" about what is there reprehended. But even if we grant that what is in question is not "immodest" in the modern "popular" sense of the word, it may well be "immodest" in the "classical" sense; and even if it does not involve a proximate danger to chastity, it may well involve a remote danger. If this is correct, we have an easy way of defending the Church's pronouncements against the jibes and criticisms in question.

The treatment of modesty given by St. Thomas allows, as we have seen, for considerable variation in standards of clothing, according to time, place, and circumstances, etc., and he allows that it depends largely upon social custom. There have, then, been variations in modesty, in St. Thomas's sense of the term, as there have been in the sense of shame. We remarked in the last chapter that, while modesty is in a sense natural to man, it has doubtless been given a wider extension through human sin. "The more man sins, the more numerous become the occasions of sin, and hence it is ever more incumbent on him to avoid things which may be in themselves innocent or harmless, but have become dangerous to him precisely because they are, to him, real or likely occasions of sin." Conversely, "the less a human being is liable to sin, the less intense will be the sense of shame, and the virtue of modesty will be less extensive in matters of detail." Here, then, we have another source of variations in the matter of modesty.

That wide variations have in fact existed, and still exist, admits of

¹ The decree does not say what specifically constitutes "immodest dress", doubtless because it is intended for the Universal Church, and allowance is accordingly made for local variations of custom, and for further specification by local Ordinaries.

no denial. It is not necessary for us to discuss this matter in detail. But in general, we can apply principles similar to those laid down for the explanation of variations in the sense of shame, in the last chapter. In other words, while we must on the one hand bear in mind the possibility of the temporary obliteration of some secondary precepts of the moral law in certain places, we must not infer that every departure from the standard of modesty accepted by ourselves in our own time and place implies sin in others. We must allow for different stages of culture, climate, etc. Further, "it may well be that some things which are obviously contrary to our own standards are due rather to a greater innocence and absence of sin in certain tribes. And if and when this is the case, we ought to beware of insisting upon our own more elaborate practices, lest we should suggest to these comparatively innocent souls the possibility of sin where none has hitherto existed. On the other hand, we ought obviously to be equally prudent in encouraging or tolerating departures from accepted standards governing our own state of society. We must avoid two extremes. We must not expect that our own particular standard will be the one for all people at all times, and certainly not that it will remain sacrosanct in all its details. But on the other hand, we must beware of encouraging too sudden a departure from such standards."

We saw that, in discussing the principles underlying modesty, St. Thomas quoted a passage from the Confessions of St. Augustine, Book III, cap. 8. In the chapter immediately preceding this one, there are some equally helpful observations by the Doctor of Hippo. He remarks that, when he was a disciple of the Manichaeans, he did not know "the true and inward justice which does not judge according to custom but according to the most righteous law of Almighty God, by which the manners and customs of different places and times are shaped as is best for those times and places. . . . Hence Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and David, etc., were just in this way, though they are regarded as wicked by ignorant men, who judge things from the human standpoint, and measure all the conduct of the human race by the standard of their own custom. . . . Such are those who are indignant when they hear that something was lawful for just men in other days which is not lawful to just men in these times. . . . Men, whose life upon earth is short, are unable to compare the conditions of past ages and other peoples with those of their own experience" (Confessions, Lib. III, cap. vii).

We must, then, expect and be prepared for changes in the standards of modesty. Victorian ladies would never bathe save in the most impossible bathing costumes which to-day would arouse

our ridicule. We also—or some of us at least—tolerate now such things as “shorts” for lady cyclists. But we still—and doubtless rightly—think that what is quite all right for the open air and for sports and pastimes is not necessarily the most suitable costume to wear at divine service in church.¹

It is only by making full allowance for these variations in standards of modesty that we can account for some things which would otherwise be inexplicable. An instance would be the reaction against nudity in art and sculpture which set in so strongly in Rome in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This went to such extremes that Bernini was instructed to make a leaden robe to cover the naked statue of Justice in St. Peter's,² and two of Bernini's own figures on the monument of Pope Alexander VII had to be dealt with in a similar manner. Michelangelo's “Last Judgment” was severely criticised because of the nudity of some of the figures, and Pope Innocent X is said to have taken offence at a nude figure of the child Jesus in a picture by Guercino, and Pietro da Cortona was compelled to clothe it.³

Not only were contemporary paintings and sculptures treated in this strange way, but even the masterpieces of classical antiquity had to submit to similar “purification”. To this day the visitor to the Vatican will see plaster casts and figleaves carefully placed over the genital organs, not only of human beings, but even of God's animal creation.

But to understand all this, we must bear in mind the corrupt moral state of the Roman populace in those times. History is sufficiently explicit on this point, and an unbiased writer like Sir Rennell Rodd remarks apropos of the clothing of the statue of Justice in St. Peter's, that “the perfect modelling of the nude was responsible for an unhealthy infatuation which became notorious, and it was therefore veiled from prurient eyes.”⁴

One thing is clear: these actions by the Roman ecclesiastical authorities cannot possibly have been motivated by any idea that the

¹ A boy was once sent home from a certain Catholic school at Louvain for being “immodestly dressed”. The fact is that as it was a hot summer's day, he was wearing an open “V” shirt, without a singlet! I also remember that, in an English Convent school where the little girls were accustomed to wear socks, this eminently hygienic custom had to be abandoned in favour of long stockings, as a result of a protest from a priest. I remember also that in another Convent school, the nuns protested at socks being worn by girls in a stage entertainment. A priest reminded the good sisters that God made legs, but he did not make stockings! Many other incidents might be recounted. They seem to indicate an exaggerated insistence upon what may be, after all, only a temporary fashion or standard of “modest” clothes.

² See Rennell Rodd, *Rome of the Renaissance and To-day*, p. 292.

³ Baedeker's *Rome and Central Italy*, 1930 edn., p. 439, and Pastor, *History of the Popes*, Vol. XII, p. 611, pp. 614 et seq. \ also Vol. XXX, pp. 380-382.

⁴ Op. at., p. 292.

sexual organs of man and of animals are really impure or indecent in themselves, for that would amount to blasphemy against the Creator who "saw all things that He had made, and behold they were very good". These actions are, however, an indication of the lengths to which modesty had to go at that time because of the prevalence of human sin. Where there is less sin, and less danger of sin, less is required in the matter of modesty.

It must not, however, be inferred that nudity in art, etc. is always harmless. That nudity may be associated with lasciviousness is only too obvious. With Vermeersch,¹ we would distinguish between the nude and the obscene. This distinguished moral theologian writes thus: "Observes, non omne nudum dici posse obscenum." He adds: "Vulgo dicitur obscenum nudum allectans, et describi potest: 'turpis in nuditate manifestatio animi vel sollicitatio.' " In other words the obscene, as distinct from the nude in general, is that kind of nudity which is associated with an evil mind, and is in fact practised in order to tempt to evil.

This leads us to the subject of nudity in general. A French theologian, Pere Michaud, does not hesitate to say, in an article in the *Revue Apologetique* for January 1937, that complete nakedness does not shock certain people, especially the young. He remarks that custom plays a great part in this matter, and that we must also bear in mind personal innocence in the case of the young, and apparently, grace in the case of some others. He adds that Pere de la Vaissiere, S.J., has brought forward a number of experiences showing that a very definite modesty or sense of shame (*pudeur*) can co-exist with complete nudity.²

Let us consider the case of children first. Pere de la Vaissiere³ remarks that "since sex shame is linked with the exercise of the sex instinct, it is not to be wondered at that the former is not in evidence before the latter begins to function." He quotes with approval the view of Havelock Ellis: "It may fairly be said that complete development of modesty only takes place at the advent of puberty. We may admit . . . that modesty may appear at a very early age if sexual desire appears early" (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, II, 37).

On this we would remark that young children are usually innocent, at least until they reach the age of reason and unless their moral outlook has already been seared or corrupted, and in our opinion there is, in ordinary circumstances, no need, when children are given baths, either for "modesty powder", bathing drawers, or any other such "aids to purity". It must not be thought that we

¹ *Theologica Moralis*, IV, p. 118.

² We mention these cases on pp. 203-204.

³ *Modesty*, pp. 36-37.

despise or condemn all such aids or "precautions". But we would advocate moderation in such matters. And certainly the interests of bodily cleanliness ought to be taken into consideration in such matters.

Continuing the same line of thought, there may be no inherent indecency in members of the same sex bathing together in a state of nudity, under suitable circumstances, and if due precautions are taken, especially if this is in accordance with local custom. But the practice would certainly be at least undesirable, if such bathing were an occasion for unpleasant remarks or jests, and it might even be dangerous, unless one were fairly certain that no harm would result to the persons concerned. Also, one ought to bear in mind the duties of Christian charity, to which we shall refer later.

Mixed bathing in a state of nudity would obviously be on a different footing, except possibly in the case of very young children.

Such temporary nudity is very different from the phenomenon with which we must now deal. It is a fact that, as Dr. Ruland says in his work on Pastoral Medicine, "in the central parts of South America and Africa, as well as on the islands of East Africa and around Australia, we can still find a considerable portion of mankind living without anything whatsoever" (op. cit., p. 258). Detailed evidence on this is quoted by Pere de la Vaissière in his work on Modesty. He gives on p. 32 the testimony of Father Tapie concerning the Indians in the interior of Brazil: "The men wear no clothes; only the Karajas women wear a semblance of clothing; the Kayapo women wear nothing." Pere de la Vaissière concludes: "The findings of travellers and explorers to-day bear out the testimony of these missionaries. Savages throughout the world live in a state of complete nakedness."

These facts are certainly disturbing, and present a difficult problem for theology. Yet it is surely a problem which should be faced. One simple solution, of course, would be to regard all these things as due to a temporary obliteration of the part of the moral law concerning modesty and verecundia. As we saw in an earlier chapter, St. Thomas makes full allowance for some such temporary obliteration in the case of the secondary precepts of the moral law (See p. 67). Another possibility would be to urge, with Dr. J. J. Walsh, that after all such cases of nudity are comparatively rare, when compared with the vast majority of mankind, and that they may be treated in an analogous way to the presence of colour blindness in certain individuals (Sex Instruction, by J. J. Walsh, ch. X).

But the position seems hardly to admit of this somewhat simple solution. It is surely complicated by the fact that, as Dr. Ruland points out, "the primitives referred to possess, as a matter of fact,

a well-developed sense of shame.”¹ Similarly, Pere de la Vaissiere quotes the testimony of Father Tapie, concerning the Kayopo Indians, who are naked, to the effect that “the moral deportment of both men and women is perfect: I have not so much as once observed a look or a gesture which offended against modesty, and the virtue is better safeguarded among them than among the citizens of our so-called centres of civilisation and culture” (Modesty, pp. 32-33). Hence, it seems difficult to explain the nudity of these people in terms of moral degradation.

Perhaps a solution might be found by developing some ideas put forward by St. Thomas in his treatment of Modesty already quoted. We have expressed in an earlier chapter the opinion that St. Thomas would hold that the virtue of modesty was “fundamentally present” in the state of innocence, though no clothes were then worn at all. It was “the custom”, sanctioned by the moral law, and in accordance with right reason, for man then to be naked. He did not then suffer from extremes of heat or cold, and he was not then subject to the rebellion of the sex appetites and organs.² Could we account for the nudity of these various tribes at the present time by an analogous extension of the notion of modesty? In this connection, Dr. Ruland’s assertion that, while devoid of a “local sense of shame”, these primitives display a very definite “functional sense of shame”, might provide one of the elements for a solution of the problem.

A concrete example will help to focus our views on this difficult matter. It consists in the experience of a Catholic missionary bishop in Africa, as recorded by Michaud in the article in the *Revue Apologetique* for January 1937, already referred to. We are told that the good bishop was on his rounds, visiting his flocks in the jungle. He came to one collection of huts, in a clearing, but was horrified when he was met by a young negress absolutely in the state in which God created her. “My dear child,” he murmured, when he had recovered his equilibrium, “you must not appear before me like that.” And thereupon he opened his valise, and took out a coloured pocket handkerchief. “Go, my child, and put this on,” said His Lordship, “and then return to me.” The girl smiled, bowed, and retired to a hut, with the precious handkerchief. She returned a few moments later with an even broader smile, and a more profound curtsy, with the handkerchief neatly arranged on her head!

The question arises: who was right? the girl, or the bishop? The best answer would seem to be that “Both were right.” For each was acting in accordance with his and her moral ideas on the require-

¹ "Pastoral Medicine, p. 258.

² See p. 13.

ments of modesty, and these, as we have seen, vary greatly according to conditions of time and place.

While a satisfactory explanation of nudity amongst savages may be possible,¹ it is quite otherwise with the attempt to introduce complete nudity into modern civilised countries by means of “Nudist Camps”, etc. The practice advocated by these misguided people is to be condemned, precisely because it is an unwarranted departure from the accepted standards of modesty of our own time and civilisation. Further, it takes no account of the effects of original sin upon the human race, and the consequent occasion of sin which may be presented to “weaker brethren” by such unnecessary display. It completely disregards the duties of Christian charity in the matter—a point to which we shall return. Pere de la Vaissiere has some very wise remarks which convey a balanced verdict on this modern practice, on p. 77 of his work on Modesty: “If we energetically censure the members of a nudist colony by declaring: ‘You have no sense of modesty/ our intentions may be the best in the world, but, strictly speaking, our accusation is without foundation. Those who come to the defence of clothing are certainly right, for they have in their favour the teachings of education, the practice of persons considered well-bred, and, above all, the repeated injunctions of Holy Mother Church. Nevertheless, the so-called enlightened members of these pernicious societies possess a form of modesty, which, while not individuated like ours, is none the less real for being of inferior quality.’ It is inferior in quality precisely because it unwisely sacrifices safeguards against undue sexual freedom, and repudiates those brakes upon the manifestations of the sexual instinct which have proved so helpful in the past.

Thus, while we urge that, under certain circumstances, complete nudity may co-exist with comparative innocence, we would also urge that aids or precautions which exist in a given state of society at a particular time should not lightly be despised or condemned. We must ever remember that, as St. Thomas says, it is precisely the departure from accepted standards of “modesty” (in his sense of the term) which constitutes at least one form of “immodesty” (also in his sense of the term). And those who are inclined to criticise the particular regulations concerning modesty laid down by the authorities of the Catholic Church might well ask themselves whether the Church is not perhaps wiser than they are themselves. In particular, given the corrupt state of modern society in so many “civilised” countries, and the abundance of temptations which are set before the

¹A satisfactory solution would of course have to bear in mind the implications of the texts in Genesis and the other books of scripture concerning nudity and clothing. Cf. pp. 77-79.

young, we think any right-minded person will admire the prudence and wisdom of Pope Pius XII when he thus addressed Catholic Mothers:

„ “You have to prepare your sons and daughters so that they may pass with unfaltering step, like those who pick their way among serpents, through that time of crises and physical change (i.e., adolescence); and pass through it without losing any of the joy of innocence, preserving that natural instinct of modesty with which Providence has girt them as a check upon wayward passion. That sense of modesty, which in its spontaneous abhorrence from the impure, is akin to the sense of religion, is made of little account in these days; but you, mothers, will take care that your children do not lose it through anything unbecoming in dress or self-adornment, through unbecoming familiarities or immoral spectacles; on the contrary, you will seek to make it more delicate, more alert, more upright and sincere” (Address to Mothers, by Pope Pius XII, C.T.S. edn., p. u).

There is another point which we can mention here, and that is the impact of the duties of Christian charity upon the virtue of modesty. We have indeed urged in the course of this work that concupiscence is a variable factor, and can diminish under the influence of grace. But we have also pointed out that concupiscence has been wholly absent only from two human natures, those of Our Lord and of His Blessed Mother. For others, concupiscence, though doubtless diminishing in intensity through the influence of grace, will ever remain, and to the extent that it remains, the sense of “shame” will also remain with it. Moreover, it is obvious that the degree in which concupiscence is active, and constitutes a serious danger, will vary at a given time among different individuals. And as we never live to ourselves alone, but are essentially members one of another, Christian charity will urge us to bear in mind the weaknesses of others, and to avoid anything which might lead them into temptation or sin.

The principle which should govern our conduct in this respect is similar to that which was laid down by St. Paul when he was dealing with the question of Christians consuming meat which had in actual fact been associated in some way or other with the worship of idols. There were some who urged that after all, an idol is nothing, and that therefore the fact that meat had been offered to idols could not really contaminate it. St. Paul replies that there are many things which are lawful in themselves, but some may be inexpedient, because of the prejudices of other people: “All things

are lawful—but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful—but not all things edify. Let none seek his own profit, but his neighbour's. . . . If some unbeliever inviteth you, and you wish to go, eat everything that is set before you, making no inquiry for conscience' sake. But if someone say to you, 'This is from a sacrifice', eat it not, for the sake of him that told you, and for conscience sake—the other's conscience, I mean, not your own" (I Corinthians, x, 23-28, Westminster Version). The same Apostle makes similar pronouncements elsewhere: "If food scandalise my brother, I will eat no flesh for evermore" (I Cor., viii, 13). "I know, and am confident in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is of itself unclean, only for him that reckoneth aught unclean it is unclean. . . . Do not by thy food destroy him for whom Christ died" (Romans xiv, 14-15).

Similar considerations should surely rule our own attitude towards the subject of modesty and indeed in all matters connected with sex. We should avoid anything that would be an occasion of sin to others, even though it is harmless and innocent so far as we ourselves are concerned. The importance of this principle, not only in the training of the young, but also in courtship and in marriage itself, is obvious. Charity and prudence combined together will ensure that we shall be able to give full scope to the requirements of Christian modesty without allowing this salutary virtue to degenerate into prudery, and while inculcating modesty to the young, we shall at the same time be careful to instruct them that sex itself is a sacred institution, and in no wise unclean, in itself.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

SEX IN THE WORLD OF SPIRITS

I. SEX IN THE RISEN BODY

Sooner or later, the human society constituted by husband and wife, and their children will be broken up by death, and this at once gives rise to some questions. Will there be some reunion in the next world, with mutual recognition? And shall we rise again in the next world as male and female?

The first question is easily answered. It is the consistent teaching of Christian Tradition that the life of the next world will definitely be a social life, and that our individual enjoyment of the Beatific Vision will not prevent the existence of enjoyment also of the company of others who are equally blessed with ourselves. Further, Christian Tradition is extremely favourable to the idea that there will be mutual recognition in the next world of those who have been bound together by the ties of charity and mutual love in this. Mutual love will exist also in the next world, but its basis will be altered, according to theologians. For it will then be founded absolutely on the love of God himself, and not be mixed with any other motives or considerations as it is in this world.

The second question is not so easy to answer. St. Thomas Aquinas deals with it in the course of a question in the Supplement to the Third Part of the *Summa Theologica**- In the first article, he lays down the important principle that, as soul and body correspond to each other, whatever is found among the parts of the body must have its corresponding counterpart in the soul, so that if a particular part of the body were absent in the next world, the soul would lack one of its bodily counterparts, and the whole human being would be to that extent incomplete.²

This obviously implies that the sexual diversities of male and female have their corresponding diversities in the souls of man and woman. And hence, in the next world, the soul of a man will eventually have its male body, and the soul of a woman its female one. St. Thomas in article 3 of the next question expressly asserts that we

¹ *Summa Theologica*, III Suppl., q. 80.

² Ibid., art. i: "Quidquid in partibus corporis apparet, totum originaliter et quodammodo implicite in anima continetur. . . . Nec homo posset esse perfectus nisi totum quod in anima implicite continetur, exterius in corpore explicaretur; nec etiam corpus animae ad plenum proportionaliter responderet.... Oportet ergo quod omnia membra quae nunc sunt in corpore hominis, in resurrectione reparentur,"

shall rise according to our proper sex, male or female, adding that "though there will be a difference of sex, there will be no confusion when we mutually behold one another, for there will then be no lust inciting us to acts which cause such confusion."¹

In Article 4 of the same question, St. Thomas discusses the exercise of animal functions in the risen body. He remarks that some human functions are concerned with our present natures, through the activity of which we tend towards our ultimate perfection. The operations of these functions will obviously not be required when we have reached our last end. This class of operations includes the activity of generation, and accordingly, this particular activity will be absent from our risen body. Nevertheless, as St. Thomas explains in answer to the second difficulty, sexual differences belong to the perfection of human nature, as it will be reconstituted in the next world, and hence the sex organs will not exist in vain, even though they will not be used as at present.²

According to St. Thomas, then, there is a profound difference between male and female, in soul as well as in body, and the soul of one sex requires a body of the same sex. Hence there will be males and females in heaven, i.e., male souls with male bodies, and female souls with female bodies. Yet there will be no generation or reproduction. The Compendium "Theologiae, c. 156, explains the reason for this very clearly. Here St. Thomas explains that there will be no sexual intercourse after the resurrection, "because this is ordained for animal generation. Generation is essentially related to mortal life, and exists in order that what cannot be conserved from the individual standpoint shall be conserved at least as a species."³

But in the next life, soul and body are both endowed with immortality, and hence the need for generation will no longer be present.⁴

¹ Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 81, art. 3: "Considerata natura individui, debetor diversus sexus diversis hominibus, et haec etiam diversitas competit perfectioni speciei. . . . Et ideo . . . resurgent homines . . . in diversis sexibus: et quamvis sit differentia sexuum, deerit tamen confusio mutuae visionis, quia aberit libido incitans ad turpes actus, ex quibus confusio causatur."

² Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 81, art. 4: "Illae operationes quae ordinantur ad primam perfectionem humanae naturae vel causandam vel conservandum, non erunt in resurrectione, et hujusmodi sunt actiones animalis vitae in homine. . . . Et quia comedere, et bibere, et dormire, et generare, ad animalem vitam pertinent, cum sint ad primam perfectionem naturae ordinata, ideo in resurrectione talia non erunt." Cf. ad. 2: "Differentia sexuum et membrorum varietas erit ad naturae humanae perfectionem redintegrandam et in specie et in individuo; unde non sequitur quod sint frustra, quamvis animales operationes desint."

³ "Generatio mortali vitae deservit, ut quod secundum individuum conservari non potest, conservator saltem in specie."—Compendium Theologiae, c. 156.

⁴ Note how the absence of the sex function in the next world is bound up with the fact that the primary purpose of sex is the procreation of the race. Were its primary-purpose the expression of mutual love, etc., as some moderns have suggested, it would surely have a place in the next world.

Here, then, we have the theological explanation of the truth clearly taught by Our Lord in the Gospel. For St. Luke records this statement by Jesus:

“The children of this world marry and are given in marriage, but they that have been counted worthy of attaining to that world, and to the resurrection from the dead, are neither to marry nor to be given in marriage, for neither can they die any more; they are as the angels, and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.”¹

We note that Our Lord here gives the same reason for the absence of procreation as that elaborated later by St. Thomas Aquinas: as people then will die no more, there will be no need to marry or to procreate children. There will, then, be no such materialties between husband and wife in the next world. But that does not mean that there will be no spiritual ties. Our Lord’s words need not be taken in that extreme sense, and certainly Tradition does not so interpret them.

II. SEX IN THE ANGELS

Our Lord’s words quoted in the previous section, to the effect that human beings will not exercise the sex function in the next world but will be “as the angels”, is itself a sufficient proof that there is neither sex nor generation in these pure spirits. In any case, sex is essentially related to a material organism, and hence it would be difficult to imagine how any sexual differences could be found in angels.

in. SEX IN GOD?

As we have just excluded sexual differentiation from the angels, on the ground that they are pure spirits, it might seem that we must afortiori exclude any idea of sex from God, the “supreme Spirit, who alone exists of himself.” But here there is a difficulty, arising from the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. For is not the First Person of the Trinity called the Father, and is it not a doctrine of the Catholic Faith that the Father generates the Second Person, who is accordingly called the Son? And are not “Father” and “Son” terms which signify the male sex? Are we bound in consequence to say that God is masculine?

¹ Luke, xx, 34-36, Westminster Version. St. Matthew’s account is briefer: “At the resurrection, they are neither to marry nor to be given in marriage, but they are to be like angels in heaven” (XXII, 30).

To deal adequately with this matter, we should have to give a complete exposition of the doctrine of analogy, as applied to our knowledge of God. That is not possible here. We will confine ourselves to pointing out that we know God through concepts derived from created things. But when we apply these notions to God, we have to free them from any imperfection which they may imply as realised in creatures, and then further, we must raise the perfection itself to a transcendent degree when applying it to God. This is what we do when we attribute the concept of "generation" to God. Even in creatures, the term may be applied either to material generation, i.e., sexual generation, or to spiritual generation, as when we say that the mind generates a thought. When the term is applied to God, it is applied, not in the material sense, but in the spiritual sense. In the words of St. Thomas Aquinas: "God is not of a fleshly nature, nor does He need to unite himself to a woman in order to generate a child, but He is of a spiritual nature. . . . Hence the term 'generation' as applied to God must be understood in the sense in which it agrees with an intellectual nature."¹

The analogical character of the term "generation" as applied to God has its counterpart in the analogical character of the terms "Father", "Son", "paternity" and "filiation" as applied to the Deity. When we say that the First Person of the Trinity is the Father, and the Second Person the Son, we mean, not that these two Persons are really of the male sex, but that the perfection attached to created paternity and found in human fathers can be applied, analogically, to the First Person of the Trinity, and the corresponding perfection of filiation or sonship applied to the Second Person.

Even so, it may be asked why the analogy should have been sought in the male partner of human or created generation, rather than in the female. The explanation of this is that, traditionally, and indeed ever since Aristotle, the human mind has regarded the male as the active partner in generation, and the female as the passive partner. In view of this, it was obviously unsuitable that the female partner in generation should have been taken as the source of the analogy to be applied to God. For God is Pure Act, and in Him there is no passivity at all.

Even so, we must remember that, as we have pointed out above, when we apply the notion of perfection to God, we must not only exclude any imperfection found in it, but also raise the perfection itself to a transcendent degree. Hence, Fatherhood in God is a

¹ Opusc. 3, De ration, fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum, c. i: "Deus non est carnalis naturae ut feminam requirat cui commisceatur ad prolis generationem, sed est spiritualis naturae. . . . Est ergo accipienda generatio secundum quod convenit intellectuali naturae."

perfection which contains indeed all the perfection found in human paternity, without any imperfection, but also infinitely more. This is of the utmost importance.

It might now be objected that the Aristotelian conception of sex is rather out of date, and that in point of fact the female, far from being passive, is herself a very active partner in generation. If it were established that the female is in fact more active than the male in generation, then there might be room for suggesting that the term "Father" and applied to God was not so suitable as that of "Mother". But science has not established any such superior activity of the female over the male in generation. In point of fact, as we have said in an earlier chapter, it is the male who determines the sex of the child. And in any case, in common language "Fatherhood" is still regarded as the active factor in generation.

There is, however, one other point. It might be urged that at least science has shown that the two sexes are complementary to each other, and are related as partners rather than as the active and passive principle respectively. Moreover, is it not a fact that there are specifically female perfections, which it would be absurd to regard essentially as imperfections? Are not all created perfections faint and far-off images of the Divine Perfection? Hence are we not more or less bound, in virtue of our own principles, to attribute to God eminenter the characteristic perfections of the female sex?

Certainly, all created perfections are found eminenter in God. And there is no need to deny the existence of specifically female perfections and graces. But the question still remains whether these are not so closely associated with imperfections—even if only that of dependence upon another—that they might well be unsuitable for attribution to God.

But another solution might be suggested, based upon the transcendental character of the Divine perfections. We attribute, for instance, justice and mercy to God, but we also insist that in God these ultimately coincide with each other in one transcendental perfection which contains all the perfection implied in the created qualities of justice and mercy. Similarly, if there are in reality some perfections attaching to femininity and motherhood, as well as to paternity, and if created paternity excludes these feminine perfections, then this limitation in the notion of created paternity must be excluded when we transfer it to God, and we must say that the perfection of paternity, in the transcendental degree in which it exists in God, includes all perfection found in created maternity. Even so, there may well be cogent reasons why we should continue to call the First Person of the Trinity "Father" rather than "Mother".

In point of fact, some feminine notions are attributed to God by

the Church's best theologians. Thus, it is the woman who conceives the child, and theologians apply to the Second Person of the Trinity the text of the Book of Proverbs which says that Wisdom was "conceived". That is to say, that Wisdom, the Second Person of the Trinity, was "conceived" by the First Person. Again, it is the woman who gives birth to the child, and the same Book of Proverbs speaks of Wisdom as being "born", in a text which theologians also interpret of God the Son. Moreover, the Fathers and theologians did not hesitate to interpret of the generation of God the Son the words of the old Latin version of Psalm 109: "Ex utero ante luciferum genui te"—"From the womb before the day-star I begot thee." This certainly refers to the female side of generation, as it stands. All this is explained by St. Thomas Aquinas at length in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Lib. IV, cap. xi. The Angelic Doctor concludes his treatment of the subject with these significant words:

"Those things which in carnal generation belong separately to a father and a mother are all attributed in Holy Scripture to God the Father in the generation of the Word, for the Father is said to give life to the Son, to conceive Him, and to give Him birth."¹

There is another consideration which we would urge here. God is the source of all created perfections, and these all reveal some aspect of His own nature. Now, in the realm of grace, we have the quasi-infinite perfection of Blessed Mary, the Virgin Mother of God the Son. She is emphatically God's handiwork, and all her excellences, natural and supernatural are His creation. Hence, we may truly say that Mary helps to reveal to us some aspects of God's Nature which, possibly, might otherwise not be known to us. All that is excellent and perfect in her must exist in a still more excellent and indeed infinitely perfect manner in her Creator. This emphasises once more the principle we have stressed, namely, that the perfection of Fatherhood, etc., attributed to God exists in Him in a transcendent degree which may well contain whatever perfection there is in motherhood.

In view of this, we would suggest that certain theological phrases sometimes used to express the relation between Our Lady and the First Person of the Blessed Trinity call for very careful explanation, if they are to be approved for general use. Thus, many Marian theologians delight to call Our Lady the "Spouse of God the Father",

¹ "Quae in generatione camali distinctim patri et matri conveniunt, omnia in generatione Verbi Patri attribuuntur in sacris Scripturis; dicitur enim Pater et dare Filio vitam, et concipere et parturire."—*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Lib. IV, c. xx.

and in one country in the Western hemisphere the French speaking natives are accustomed to call the Blessed Virgin “la femme du bon Dieu”. Presumably this has been motivated by the fact that while God the Father eternally generates the Person of God the Son, his temporal generation in time as the Incarnate Word is the work of Mary. God the Father and Mary are thus associated in the generation of God the Son. That is perfectly true. But does it follow that Mary is the “spouse” or “wife” of God the Father? The present writer would question the validity of the inference. After all, the phrase “spouse of God the Father” might seem to attribute masculinity to God the Father in an exclusive sense, i.e., one which excludes any perfection associated with femininity, and this is surely incorrect. It would be tantamount to ignoring the transcendental character of the perfection of paternity as attributed to God. Moreover, the phrase “Spouse of God the Father” might, unless carefully explained, seem to put God the Father and Mary on one and the same plane as parents. But on the contrary, as we have seen, all the perfections of Mary, including Her divine Motherhood, are found eminenter in God. All this must not be regarded as in any way condemning the phrase “Spouse of God the Father” as applied to Mary. But it is certainly a plea for a careful explanation of the phrase, in order to avoid any anthropomorphism which it could suggest, and particularly, any over-emphasis on the masculinity of God the Father. The quasi-infinite dignity of Mary is, in any case, surely safeguarded by the thought that her own perfections come from God, and have their transcendental counterpart in Him.¹

Pagan religions, motivated doubtless by the contemplation of feminine perfections and beauty, and the wonder of motherhood, invented female deities, or else they regarded God as bisexual.² Female deities do not exist, and God is not bisexual. But the obscure need which those who invented these conceptions experienced is more than satisfied by the transcendental existence in God of all perfections, feminine as well as masculine, and by the concrete created expression of some of these perfections in the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The fact that when God the Son became Incarnate, He chose to become man, and not woman, need present no difficulty, especially in the light of what has been said, and also the fact that both traditionally and by Divine institution, the man is, as St. Paul says,

¹ Even in the case of the title Theotokos, Deipara or “Mother of God”, as applied to Our Lady, it is necessary to explain that she did not give Jesus his divine nature. That was given Him by his Father, who in this sense does, in the Divine plane, that which created mothers do, as well as what created fathers do, i.e.. He gives God the Son his Divine Nature.

² See e.g., the quotations from Karrer on p. 57.

“head of the woman” (I Corinthians xi, 3). Jesus Christ is true man, as well as true God, and being true man, there is no need for us to attribute to him female characteristics, as is sometimes done, at least in some so-called artistic representations. As true man, and as perfect man, Jesus displayed the greatest knowledge of and sympathy with the female sex, as is shown throughout the Gospels. Hence there is certainly no need to supplement Christ’s manhood by suggesting that He also “leads what may be called a womanly existence, inasmuch as since His Ascension He continues to live on earth in the Church.”¹ The Church is certainly the mystical Spouse of Christ, and Christ certainly lives in His Church. But that does not seem an adequate justification for this attribution of female characteristics to Christ as living in the Church. We may well, with the Rev. W. Le Saint, S.J., dismiss this idea as a “distortion.”²

¹ Cf. *A Great Sacrament*, by Dom Albert Hammerstede, O.S.B., St. Louis, 1945, reprinted from *Homilectic and Pastoral Review* for 1937, pp. 25-33; 130-15

² In *Theological Studies*, Sept., 1946 (Vol. VII, n. 3), p. 500.

APPENDIX ONE

VIRGINITY AND CONTEMPLATION IN THE STATE OF INNOCENCE

We have seen that St. Thomas Aquinas, when dealing *ex professo* with the state of man in the Garden of Eden before the Fall, is emphatic on the point that, in the state of innocence, continence would not have been laudable, but all would have married, and would have exercised the marriage act. He points out that continence in the present state of mankind is laudable, not because it involves a lack of fecundity, but because it removes inordinate lust. But in the state of innocence, there would have been fecundity without lust.¹

On the other hand, when dealing *ex professo* with the subject of virginity, St. Thomas teaches that virginity is desirable, because it enables those who practise it to give themselves to the contemplation of divine things.²

It may therefore be asked whether this means that there would have been no such contemplation of divine things in the state of innocence. At first sight it would seem that one would have to say that contemplation would have been absent from that state. But reflection will show that this inference cannot be correct, for in the state of innocence, Adam and Eve lived in the presence of God. In any case, in his treatment of virginity in the *Ha Ilae*, q. 152, art. 2, St. Thomas does not say that venereal pleasure renders contemplation impossible; he says that those who embrace the virgin life do so in order that they may the more easily or more freely (*liberius*) occupy themselves with the contemplation of divine things. This itself implies that some contemplation is compatible with the exercise of the sex function. Moreover, we must remember that, according to St. Thomas, the sex act is now not completely under the control of reason and will, by reason of the vehemence of concupiscence. But in the state of innocence, the sex appetite would have been completely subject to reason and will. That being so, we see no reason why some degree of the contemplation of divine things should not have been compatible with the exercise of sex in the state of innocence. All this is confirmed by the earlier treatment of the subject of virginity in the Commentary on the Sentences, subsequently incorporated into the Supplement to the Third Part of the *Summa Theologica*, where St. Thomas says indeed that contemplation is especially or particularly hindered by marriage (*maxime*

¹ See *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 3, quoted p. 23.

² *Summa Theologica*, *Ha Ilae*, q. 152, art. 2. Cf. p. 23.

per matrimonium impeditur), but not that marriage renders contemplation absolutely impossible.¹

But there remains a difficulty. For in his answer to the first objection in this same article, St. Thomas allows that the precept to marry would have bound every individual "*illo tempore quo paucitas hominum exigebat ut quilibet generation! vacaret*", and this might seem to imply that once the human race was sufficiently numerous, the obligation upon individuals to marry and to exercise the marriage act would have ceased, even in the state of innocence. And in the article itself, St. Thomas here implies that contemplation is maxime hindered by marriage.

In another treatment of the subject in the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*, q. 15, art. 2, ad. 13, St. Thomas says that "in the state in which people had to occupy themselves with the multiplication of the human race, it would not have been without fault (*absque vitio*) that one should abstain from the work of generation, and this would have been true from the standpoint of divine as well as human law. But," he adds, "in the time of grace, we ought more to stress spiritual propagation, for which those are more fitted who lead a celibate life, and therefore, in this state, it is considered more virtuous to abstain from the act of generation."²

Here again we see how careful St. Thomas is not to lay down that married life and contemplation are essentially and wholly incompatible. It is a case of some people being "more fitted" (*magis apti*) than others.

One thing seems clear; if the marriage act renders contemplation impossible, then, inasmuch as all men were bound to marry and have children in the state of innocence, at least until the human race became sufficiently numerous, i.e., until it was in a fair way to fulfil the precept "increase and multiply and fill the earth", then the "contemplation of divine things" would necessarily have been absent from the human race for very many generations—in fact, for many centuries. We cannot think that that would be St. Thomas's mind. We prefer to think that, in the state of innocence, the performance of the sex act, being wholly under the control of reason and will, and being itself moreover a religious act, would not have been incompatible in any way with such contemplation of divine things. If it is more or less incompatible with contemplation now, that is because, though still an act of the virtue of religion, the sex act suffers from the results of the Fall of Man, and reason and will recede into the background during the actual performance of the act itself.

¹ *Summa Theologica*, UT. Suppl., q. 41, art. 2: Cum ergo ad perfectionem humanae multitudinis sit necessarium aliquos contemplativae vitae inservire, quae maxime per matrimonium impeditur, inclinatio naturae ad matrimonium non obligat per modum praecepti.

² *Quaest. Disp. De Malo*, q. 15, art. 2, ad. 13: In statu in quo erat vacandum multiplication! humanae generis, non erat absque vitio quod aliquis ab actu generationis abstinere, nun secundum legem humanam quam secundum legem divinam; sed tempore gratiae debet insistere magis ad spiritualem propagationem, ad quam magis apti sunt caelibem vitam agentes; et ideo in hoc statu virtuosius reputatur ab actu generationis abstinere.

APPENDIX TWO

THE DOCTRINE OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON SEX AND MARRIAGE

The following are the chief doctrines of St. Thomas, utilised in this work. The page references are to the present part, i.e., Part Two, unless otherwise specified.

1. Woman was made as a helpmate for the work of generating offspring;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 92, art. 1;
Contra Gentes, Lib. III, cap. 123.
Cf. Part One of this work, pp. 25-26.
2. Monogamy is required for the education of human offspring, but not usually for the education of the offspring of animals;
Summa Theologica, III, Suppl., q. 65, art. 1.
Contra Gentes, III, cap. 122, 124.
Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 154, art. 2.
Quaest. Disp. De Malo, q. 15, art. 1.
Cf. Part One, pp. 44-46.
3. Generation enables living things to imitate God's eternity;
Summa Theologica, q. 98, art. 1.
De Anima, Lib. II, Pectio vii.
Cf. Part One, pp. 54-55.
4. Adam possessed most human passions;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 95, art. 2; *ibid.*, art. 3, ad. 2.
Cf. p. 7 of this work.
5. Adam did not possess the virtue of penance before his Fall;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 95, art. 3.
Cf. p. 8 of this work.
6. Adam possessed the virtue of temperance;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 95, art. 3, ad. 1.
Cf. p. 8 of this work.
7. Vice of Insensibility, discussed;
Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 142, art. 1.
Ibid., q. 153, art. 3, ad. 3.
Cf. pp. 8-9 of this work.
8. Pudicitia discussed;
Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 151, art. 1.
Cf. p. 11 of this work.
9. Verecundia associated with imperfection;
Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 151, art. 4.
Cf. p. 11 of this work.
10. ✓ Verecundia not a virtue;
Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 144, art. 1.
Cf. p. 11 of this work.

11. Modesty varies according to time and place, etc.;
Summa Theologica, IIa, IIae, q. 169, art. 1.
Cf. pp. 12, 195-197 of this work.
12. The Preternatural Gifts of Adam were for the sake of the Supernatural;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 94, art. 4.
Ibid., I, q. 95, art. 1.
Cf. pp. 13-14 of this work.
13. Adam and Eve would have propagated their kind by sexual generation, even if they had not sinned;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2.
Cf. p. 18 of this work.
14. There would have been greater pleasure in the sex act in the State of Innocence than there is now;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 3.
Cf. p. 18 of this work.
13. Adam and Eve possibly awaited a divine instruction for coition;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 2.
Cf. p. 19 of this work.
16. Continence would not have been laudable in the State of Innocence;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 3.
Cf. p. 23 of this work.
17. Sexual intercourse and childbirth would have taken place without any rupture of the hymen;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 4.
Cf. p. 26 of this work.
18. The hymen is only the material element in virginity;
Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 152, art. 1.
Cf. p. 29 of this work.
19. Man's dominion over animals in the State of Innocence;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 96.
Cf. p. 31 of this work.
20. In the State of Innocence, all would have married, and have exercised the sex act;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 99, art. 2, ad. 3.
Cf. p. 25 of this work.
21. Human inequalities in the State of Innocence;
Summa Theologica, I, q. 96, art. 3.
Cf. p. 32 of this work.
22. The original sin was one of pride;
Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 163, art. 1.
Cf. p. 48 of this work.
23. Concupiscence has been increased by actual sin;
Summa Theologica, Ia IIae, q. 85, art. 1.
Ibid., art. 3.
Cf. p. 34 of this work.
24. Distinction between primary and secondary precepts of the natural law;

- Summa Theologica, Ia IIae, q. 94, art. 4.
 Ibid., art. 6.
 Cf. p. 67 of this work.
25. Absence of fixed marriage relationship and knowledge of paternity in some primitive races;
 Summa Theologica, III, Suppl., q. 41, art. 1, ad. 2.
 Cf. p. 67 of this work.
26. Polygamy, why permitted in the Old Law;
 Summa Theologica, III, Suppl., q. 65, art. 1.
 Ibid., art. 2.
 Contra Gentes, III, c. 124.
 Cf. p. 68 of this work.
27. Concubinage in the Old Law;
 Summa Theologica, III, Suppl., q. 65, art. 3.
 Ibid., art. 4.
 Ibid., art. 5.
 Cf. p. 70 of this work.
28. Circumcision, why adopted in Old Testament;
 Summa Theologica, Ia IIae, q. 102, art. 5, ad. 1.
 Ibid., III, q. 70, art. 2, ad. 1.
 Ibid., q. 70, art. 3, ad. 1.
 Cf. p. 73 of this work.
29. Distinction between clean and unclean animals;
 Summa Theologica, Ia IIae, q. 102, art. 6, ad. 1.
 Ibid., art. 3, ad. 2.
 Cf. p. 74 of this work.
30. Virginal Conception of Our Lord, Fittingness of;
 Summa Theologica, III, q. 28, art. 1.
 Cf. p. 86 of this work.
31. Organisation of the Embryonic Christ in Mary's Womb;
 Summa Theologica, III, q. 33, art. 1.
 Ibid., art. 2.
 Cf. p. 95 of this work.
32. Mary experienced no pain in the birth of Christ;
 Summa Theologica, III, q. 35, art. 6.
 Cf. p. 101 of this work.
33. The birth of Christ miraculous;
 Summa Theologica, III, q. 28, art. 2, ad. 3.
 Cf. p. 101 of this work.
34. Our Lady's Vow of Virginity not made before her marriage;
 Summa Theologica, III, q. 28, art. 4.
 Cf. p. 105 of this work.
35. Mary and Joseph gave in their marriage a conditional consent to sexual intercourse;
 Summa Theologica, III, q. 29, art. 2.
 Cf. p. 105 of this work.
36. A virgin is not necessarily better than one who is married;
 Summa Theologica, Ia IIae, q. 152, art. 4, ad. 2.
 Cf. pp. 121-122 of this work.

37. Virginité not the most excellent of virtues;
Summa Theologica, *Ha Ilae*, q. 152, art. 5.
Cf. p. 122 of this work.
38. Thoughts and desires of morally good actions are themselves morally good;
Summa Theologica, *Ia Ilae*, q. 34, art. 1.
Cf. p. 1x4 of this work
39. The ends of marriage are related to the blessings of marriage;
Summa Theologica, *III*, Suppl., q. 65, art. 1.
Cf. p. 162 of this work.
40. The primary end of marriage is procreation;
Summa Theologica, *III*, Suppl., q. 65, art. 1.
Cf. p. 162 of this work.
41. The other ends of marriage are subordinate to procreation;
Summa Theologica, *III*, q. 29, art. 2.
Ibid., *III* Suppl., q. 49, art. 2, ad. 1.
Cf. p. 163 of this work.
42. In the sex act, concupiscence cannot be moderated by reason;
Summa Theologica, *I*, q. 98, art. 2, ad. 3.
Cf. p. 177 of this work.
43. The turpitude of the sex act is a penalty, not a fault;
Summa Theologica, *III* Suppl., q. 41, art. 3, ad. 3.
Ibid., q. 49, art. 4, ad. 2.
Cf. p. 177 of this work.
44. The sex act is not sinful even though it interferes with contemplation;
Summa Theologica, *III* Suppl., q. 41, art. 3, ad. 3.
Cf. p. 177 of this work.
45. The intensity of passion in the sex act is not against the rational order;
Summa Theologica, *III* Suppl., q. 41, art. 3, ad. 6.
Ibid., q. 49, art. 4, ad. 3.
Cf. p. 178 of this work.
46. Concomitant passion in the sex act increases its moral goodness;
Summa Theologica, *Ia Ilae*, q. 24, art. 3, ad. 1.
Cf. p. 178 of this work.
47. Sex act belongs to the virtue of justice;
Summa Theologica, *III* Suppl., q. 41, art. 4.
Cf. Part Three of this work, p. 33.
48. Sex act belongs to the virtue of religion;
Summa Theologica, *III* Suppl., q. 41, art. 4.
Cf. Part Three of this work, p. 33.
49. Married people do not laudably abstain from the exercise of the sex act, or its pleasure;
Summa Theologica, *Ha Ilae*, q. 142, art. 1, ad. 2.
Cf. p. 9 of this work and Part Three, p. 49.
50. Sex organs, why called “inhonesta”;
In *I* Cor.
Cf. pp. 137-138 of this work.

51. Sex organs will exist in the risen body;
Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 80, art. 1.
Ibid., q. 81. art. 3.
Ibid., q. 81, art. 4.
Cf. p. 208 of this work.
52. There will be no exercise of the sex function in the next life;
Summa Theologica, III Suppl., q. 81, art. 4.
Compendium Theologiae, c. 156.
Cf. p. 209 of this work.
53. Fatherhood and generation in God are not to be understood in a material sense;
De rationihus fidei, c. 1.
Cf. p. 211 of this work.
54. Characteristics of motherhood belong to God the Father;
Contra Gentes, IV, c. 11.
Cf. p. 213 of this work.
55. Virginity desirable for contemplation, etc.;
Summa Theologica, Ha Ilae, q. 152, art. 2.
Ibid., III. Suppl., q. 41. art. 2.
Cf. p. 216 of this work.

APPENDIX THREE

A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE FALL IN GENESIS III, AND A NEW DIRECTIVE FROM THE HOLY SEE

When Chapter Six on the Fall of Man was already in the hands of the printers I received a copy of *La Connaissance du Bien et du Mal, et le Pêche du Paradis*, by Professor Coppens, of Louvain (Published in 1948 with the imprimatur of the Rector Magnificus of the Catholic University of Louvain). It is a work of the first importance, and deserves more careful and detailed consideration than I can possibly give here. Suffice it to say that Professor Coppens thinks that behind the Biblical narrative of the Fall, there lies the idea of a sexual transgression. This sexual transgression was not the conjugal act itself—for that would be an unscriptural and indeed blasphemous idea—but something in the nature of an attempt to procreate the race under the protection of the pagan gods of fertility represented here by the serpent, instead of attributing the transmission of life to Jahveh. Professor Coppens does not think that the sacred author directly teaches the existence of such a sexual transgression. But he suggests that the inspired writer may have modified a previous account, which was much more definitely sexual in its implications, and which was current before and in his day. The sacred author, it is suggested, modified the story in such a way as to put the sexual motif in the background, so that the sexual character of the sin is now no more than hinted at. Professor Coppens quotes Billot as saying that, besides those matters which God as inspirer intends directly to teach us, there are other matters which are in Scripture only “by concomitance”, which are not the basis of Christian doctrine, even though they may be “*res fidei*” in the sense in which they are inspired (*De Ecclesia Christi*, 3rd edn., p. 395).

It is not my intention here to comment on this novel theory put forth by Professor Coppens. Some might indeed object that it would seem difficult to reconcile it with the Decree of the Biblical Commission in 1909 concerning the “literal historical truth” of Genesis i-iii. For it is difficult to see how there could have been any real temptation in the Garden of Eden to attribute the transmission of life to pagan gods of fertility rather than to Jahveh. But Professor Coppens would doubtless consider that an adequate reply to this is given in his statement that “there is not scarcely a single exegete, even among Catholics, who would dream of denying that the sacred writer may have used a Chanaanite framework, and the historic ideas of his time, in setting forth his account of the origins” of the world and of man (p. 26). Moreover, it is highly significant that in the recent letter from the Secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission to the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris concerning

the 1909 Decrees, Pere Voste, O.P., insists that “the literary forms of the first eleven chapters of Genesis do not correspond to any of our classical categories, and cannot be regarded in the light of Greco-Latin or modern literary forms, and hence we can neither deny nor affirm the historicity en bloc of these chapters without improperly applying to them the norms of a literary form to which they do not belong. . . . The first duty of scientific exegesis here is to make a careful study of all the literary, scientific, historical, cultural and religious problems connected with these chapters, and then there should follow a close examination of the literary methods of the ancient Eastern peoples, their psychology, their way of expressing themselves, and also their conception of historical truth; in other words, one should make an unprejudiced survey of all the material of the palaeontological, historical, epigraphical and literary sciences. Only in that way may we hope to get a clearer idea of the true nature of certain accounts in the first chapters of Genesis. To declare a priori that these accounts do not contain history in the modern sense of the word would easily give the impression that they do not contain history in any sense of the term, whereas in fact they relate, in a simple and figured language, adapted to the minds of a less developed human race, the fundamental truths underlying the economy of salvation, and give a popular description of the origins of the human race and of the chosen people. . . .”^x

It is highly significant that the Secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission here extends beyond the first chapter of Genesis the phraseology used by the Commission in its 1909 Decree concerning only the first chapter. In other words, we have a “popular account”, “adapted to the intelligence of a less developed human race”, not only of the creation of the world in general, as is given in Genesis i, but also of the origins of mankind, in Genesis ii-iii. This being so, we see no reason to criticise from this standpoint Professor Coppens’ statement that “the author of Genesis ii-iii set out to combat the Chanaanite cults of fertility and fecundity” prevalent in his time, and that “this general attitude led him to represent the primordial sin as an attempt to withdraw from Jahveh the control and blessing of his chief creative work, the institution of marriage, and to attribute, devote and consecrate it instead to Jahveh’s special enemies, the gods of the nature cults of vegetation, etc., which had opened wide the door to all those sexual aberrations which are revealed in the history of these shameful cults” (p. 26).

¹ The French text of this important letter is printed in the Clergy Review for June 1948, pp. 423-425, and in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1948, pp. 45-48. I have ventured to italicise some words which I regard as of the utmost importance.

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