

**A LOOK AT LOVE AND MARRIAGE
IN THE MIDDLE AGES**

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Lewis Edward Blackburn entitled "A Look At Love And Marriage In The Middle Ages." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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A LOOK AT LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

An Abstract

Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Lewis Edward Blackburn

December, 1969

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to study various factors affecting love and medieval marriages. We deal here with the medieval concept of love, the influence of the medieval Church on marriage, and ideas about sex that have lasted into the twentieth century. There is an effort to arrive at conclusions regarding the long range results of the medieval marriage pattern.

In gathering the data for this thesis both primary translations of medieval works and secondary sources were used. Several books that might be classified as secondary sources contained medieval passages of literature, medieval documents, laws, etc., and were a great help in forming the conclusions that are not footnoted.

The conclusions are as follows: The patriarchal family concept that dominated western society until the twentieth century was not so much purely a produce of western societal development as this development was modified by the medieval Church. The responsibility of the Church lies in its assimilation of Greco-Roman culture and Germanic practices dealing with monogamy and the permanence of marriage. The latter was primarily the result of the Church's efforts. The medieval

Church held an ambiguous attitude toward marriage. The Church favored celibacy for religious and economic reasons but found it difficult to enforce. The medieval Church was responsible for the doctrine that sex is evil which has lasted until recently. The medieval Church realized the value of certain forms of extra-marital activity as did medieval society in general. Romantic love did not originate in Eleanor of Aquitaine's Court of Love but was refined from an embryo-like existence there, and from there it spread throughout Europe. Twelfth century romantic love was not related to marriage as an ingredient but was the basis of adulterous liaisons among the medieval nobility and clergy. Medieval marriages were usually for socio economic, political, and military alliances.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The student wishes to thank Dr. Wentworth Morris for the leads on sources of information received during the past year and Dr. J. Milton Henry as well as Dr. Preston J. Hubbard for serving on the student's committee.

To all these the student is grateful for their criticisms and aid in improving the sentence structure and their approval of this thesis. The approval of Dr. Morris is especially welcomed by the student personally because he allowed the student to work independently and expressed the belief that something creative and interesting had been accomplished.

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CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARRIAGE IN THE WESTERN WORLD TO THE MIDDLE AGES

Knowledge of the background of a social institution makes understanding of the present state of that institution more meaningful. Whether or not one accepts a philosophy of history that the future development of events is the logical outgrowth of the historical evolution, one's understanding of the past provides a standard, or canon of reference, with which to evaluate the desirability of the present state of events.

In like manner, any study of love and marriage patterns in the Middle Ages is enriched by some appreciation of Roman and Grecian practices and attitudes in regard to love and marriage. The first chapter of the inquiry has been synthesized from secondary sources pertaining to cultural life in Greece and in Rome. In so doing, emphasis was placed on man's need for woman, his attitude toward her, and his treatment of her as important considerations of those paternal societies. Woman's usefulness to man affected his attitude toward her, and his attitude toward her affected his treatment of her.

The chapters that follow are devoted to the different aspects of marital life in the Middle Ages. These relate to women as mothers, sex objects, property, etc. From this total view of love and marriage in the Middle Ages, it is hoped that a clearer understanding can be obtained of the traditional role of wives that long outlasted the Middle Ages in Western Europe and accompanied the immigrants to the United States. Perhaps this inquiry will be able to dispel, at least in some degree, the popular notion of recent years that in the past marriage was more sacred and husbands and wives more inclined to fidelity.

The sources used vary from secondary sources to primary translations. Richard Lewinsohn, H. R. Hayes, and Morton Hunt have been used at length in this thesis as secondary sources. One of the major primary translations used is a recent one of Andreas Capellanus' Tractatus de Armore et de Amoris Remedio, or Treatise On Love And Its Remedy, which is usually known simply as The Art of Courtly Love.

Some of the broader questions that this paper may, hopefully, aid in answering include the following. To what extent was Christianity responsible for the traditional role of the wife in the family? Are the social and economic roles of women co-ordinated? Is this social-economic relationship cyclic? What are the results of the medieval marriage patterns today? Were loveless marriages

common in the Middle Ages? What is responsible for the evilness of sex attitude so popular till recently? Was the medieval church's attitude toward marriage a reasonable one? Were sexual perversions any less prevalent in medieval times than today? Are people really marrying younger today? Have medieval marriage patterns influenced the structure of modern society in the West through assimilation?

I. GRECIAN MARRIAGES

Hunt, in his history of love, regarded the status of women in Homeric society as superior to their status in classical times. The reason for the higher status of women in the earlier period was due to the primitive conditions that had existed, which made the role of homemaker and that of chore helper vital. That personal dependence on the wife, which demanded a measure of appreciation of her in order to secure her co-operation, lessened as the society became more advanced.¹

During the fifth century B.C., the Athenian matron lived with a husband whom her parents had contracted for her to marry. Under his guardianship, she lived "spoken of as little as possible, whether for good or ill," said Pericles, as recorded by Thucydides.² Her

¹Morton M. Hunt, The Natural History of Love, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959) p. 31.

²C. E. Robinson, Everyday Life in Ancient Greece (Oxford: The Carendon Press, 1933), p. 25.

legal status was even less enviable than her social status. Civil contracts, law suits, and debts were prohibited her.³ Not much distinguished her from the noblewoman of the Middle Ages. One major exception was that the medieval noblewoman was protected by the Church from being "divorced." The Athenian matron could be relinquished with her dowry at her husband's discretion.⁴

In Athens, laws existed to encourage men to marry.⁵ These made it obvious that the institution was not appealing to some who would normally be expected to marry. The groom might even expect a young bride, Euripides once said.

It is highly wrong to join together two young persons of the same age; for the strength of man lasts far longer, while the beauty of the female body passes away more rapidly.⁶

When an Athenian maid reached her teens, often she was betrothed to a man who, if we can believe Euripides, was often considerably older than she. Her consent was not necessary. Her resentment was probably mild as the secluded life of the Athenian female did not afford a love affair to develop prior to a girl's

³Hunt, op. cit., p. 25.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 26.

⁶Hans Licht, Sexual Life In Ancient Greece, trans. J. H. Greese, ed. Lawrence H. Dawson (London: Broadway House, 1932), p. 40, quoting Euripides.

marriage.⁷ This seclusion continued during her married life. Hardly an opportunity existed for the reputable wife to involve herself with a lover.⁸ The duty of the wife to maintain marital fidelity was sacred.⁹

Although some Greek males were known to have a penchant for pederasty, which accounts to some extent for the lack of ardor with which they entered marriage, Demosthenes in the fourth century B.C. said of wives and lovers, "Mistresses we keep for pleasure, concubines for daily attendance upon our persons, and wives to bear us legitimate children and be our housekeepers."¹⁰ Further evidence of the lack of personal adoration that the average Athenian husband felt for his wife is found in the proposal of Socrates in Plato's Republic for a community of wives.¹¹

As has been said, marriage did not emancipate the Athenian female. By marrying, she passed from her father's control, as did her dowry, to the control of her new master.¹² Her husband did not

⁷Hunt, op. cit., p. 24.; Robinson, loc. cit.

⁸Hunt, op. cit., p. 28.

⁹Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 27.

¹²Robinson, op. cit., p. 84.

expect her to share in the social life in which male guests were in attendance.¹³ She had few legal rights. While her husband might philander without fearing the law, she could not.¹⁴

Even as a widow, she could not be free. When her husband died, she had to look for support to her maiden family and heirs because her husband's property passed to his sons, not to her.¹⁵

All her life, the Athenian female was alone. Her quarters were apart from the men's. If she were able to afford slaves, she did not leave the house to run errands or to do the shopping. A faithful wife might attend a few public festivals. An adulteress attending a public festival might be maltreated in any manner but could not be slain.¹⁶

The next great stage in western civilization was the Roman one.¹⁷ While Greece was in her "golden age," Rome was in the becoming stage.

II. ROMAN MARRIAGES

The Roman male was more heterosexual than the Greek male. As a consequence, he was less inclined to reject marriage. What

¹³Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁴Hunt, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 24-25.

pederasty that existed was mechanical--the satisfying of an appetite. Whether heterosexual or homosexual, to the Roman, sex was an appetite, says Hunt, that required no justification to satisfy.¹⁷

For the Roman wife of the early Republic, life was much the same as it was across the Adriatic on the Balkan peninsula where Greece was in the declining stage with woman's status still similar to that of an irresponsible child. Several centuries later, the Roman wife was to attain a new and more independent social status only to be deprived of it as the Dark Ages closed in on her.

The early Romans accepted three types of marriages. They were the "confarreatio," the "coemptio," and the "usus."¹⁸ The oldest of these was the "confarreatio," which was a patrician marriage,¹⁹ in which the bride passed by a religious ceremony from the authority of her father to that of her husband. The "coemptio" was a symbolic sale in which the bride's father parted with his daughter.²⁰ Before the time of tribune Canuleius, this plebeian marriage did not transfer the bride from the family of her father to that of her husband. The hard feelings this caused resulted in the transfer of authority to the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁸Jerome Carcopino, Daily Life In Ancient Rome, trans. E. O. Lorimer, ed. Henry T. Howell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 80.

¹⁹Otto Kiefer, Sexual Life In Ancient Rome, trans. Gilbert and Helen Highet (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1962), p. 16.

²⁰Carcopino, loc. cit.

husband.²¹ The common law marriage which existed following one year of living together intimately was known as "usus."²² This marriage often united a plebeian man and a patrician woman.²³ One can venture to guess that "usus" provided a way to save the honor of an indiscreet lady.

Unlike the Greek bride, who passed in marriage from the control of her father to the control of her husband for the duration of the marriage, the Roman bride of the patrician class gradually--as part of her emancipation from her husband--chose to marry "sine in manum conventione," a condition of marriage in which she and her property remained within the authority of her father. Any of the three marriages could take the form of "sine in manum conventione."²⁴

The Roman bride who married in the ceremonious and indissoluble "confarreatio"²⁵ enjoyed a more intimate and enduring marriage than her Greek counterpart. By contract, the Roman bride who married by "usus" had only to miss three consecutive nights during the first year with her man to invalidate the marriage.²⁶ Also no intermarriage between a plebeian and a patrician was recognized in civil court until tribune Canuleius removed the ban.²⁷

²¹Kiefer, loc. cit.

²²Carcopino, loc. cit.

²³Ibid.; Kiefer, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁴Kiefer, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 16

²⁷Ibid., p. 10.

From the earliest days of the Roman Republic, the father was the head of the family. The extent of authority exercised by the father and husband over his family perhaps partially accounts for the preference of the later Roman wives to prefer to marry "sine in manum conventione."²⁸ The assumption here is that blood is thicker than water. The husband exercised complete control over the wife--more so than in the Middle Ages when the Christian Church considered the sanctioning and to some extent, the success of marriage, its prerogative. In the Roman Republic, the wife was subject to marital disciplining including corporal punishment; to slavery when her services were sold by her husband; and to receiving death at her husband's hands when caught in adultery by him. By the letter of "The Laws Of The Twelve Tablets" a child fared no better.²⁹

As time passed and the Republic passed into the Empire, women underwent a change in status not altogether dissimilar to that of women in the United States in the twentieth century. Women became more independent; adultery and divorce increased; and the birth rate declined.³⁰ Cato the Elder in 195 B.C. warned the males that women would not be content to be the mere equal of men.³¹

The increasing independence of the Roman matron corresponded with increasing foreign cultural influences and their assimilation into the country, increased education for women, and a marked tendency

²⁸Ibid., pp. 14-15. The inference is that of the writer of this paper.

²⁹Hunt, loc. cit., p. 64.

³⁰Ibid., p. 67.

³¹Ibid., p. 65.

for Roman men of the second and first centuries B.C. to enjoy the only illegal natural union in Rome at the time--adultery.³²

For a man and a woman to form an adulterous relationship was easier in Rome than in Greece where seclusion was the order of the days and nights.³³ The lack of adequate public hotels³⁴ probably had some lessening effect however.

As expansion brought wealth and leisure to the upper classes of Roman society, Rome suffered a declining need for woman as homemaker and chore helper.³⁵ Perhaps the loss of her usefulness to some extent in these traditional roles left a void, which the Roman wife filled with the affections of several men. Perhaps also the increasing resort to "usus" in which the bride entered less completely into marriage with her husband was symptomatic of this restlessness.³⁶ Under the latter arrangement, the husband might enjoy the use of his bride's dowry so long as he enjoyed her admiration and accorded her the respect she would have received had she lived in a more primitive stage of the Republic.³⁷

³²Ibid., pp. 63-67.

³³E. R. Boak and William G. Sinniger, A History of Rome To A.D. 565.

³⁴Hunt, op. cit., p. 67.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 64-65.; vide footnote 1.

³⁶Vide footnote 37.

³⁷Hunt asserted that after the Punic Wars it came to be that a wife might divorce her husband, if she disliked the marriage, and return home with her dowry, if she had married by "usus." p. 65.

The Lucretia of the earlier century who thought her husband to be better off were she dead after having been soiled by Tarquinius gave way to the adulteress of the Augustan age who, like the Caesar's own daughter, turned to debauchments as a sophisticated amusement.³⁸

Augustus proclaimed a series of important laws known as the "Julian Laws" over a period of nine years.³⁹ These laws further emancipated women and worked adversely on men. No longer could an irate husband execute an unfaithful wife; he now had to accuse her in court.⁴⁰ Should his wife be found guilty in court, she could be fined half of her dowry and lose a third of all her other property. By this method or attempt at controlling adultery, a husband stood to lose financially by accusing his wife. Another of the "Julian Laws" imposed stiff penalties on the cuckold or marital intruder, who was now required to confine his extramarital adventures to prostitutes or at least to the unattached women.⁴¹ Some "Julian Laws" aimed to make marriage and childbirth more attractive by offering political and economic concessions to those who complied.⁴²

³⁸Julia, daughter of Augustus, caused her father much grief by her love affairs, according to Seneca in Hunt, op. cit., p. 75.

³⁹Hunt, op. cit., p. 72.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 64.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 72.

⁴²Ibid., p. 75.

Some of the wives in the period of the Empire remained as faithful to their husbands as Lucretia; but many considered themselves liberated, and many of these feared childbearing for the effects that might have on their appearance. Many of the liberated also took no shame in blatant adultery.⁴³ Courtesans increased, but their activities did not replace casual adultery with amateurs, at least for many sophisticates.⁴⁴

The marital pattern of monogamy, which existed in Greece and Rome, became the marital pattern of Christians. The Christians took the rite more seriously and aimed at permanence. The author of The Natural History of Love, whose work has been referred to by several writers in the field of sex history, said of the Christian adaptation and modification of Roman monogamy, "Most authorities agree that this was a major contribution to the sexual and marital life of Western man."⁴⁵

Another adaptation utilized by the Christians was that of early marriages, especially in the instance of the female. One authority affirmed this on the basis of inscriptions found in the catacombs of

⁴³ Carcopino, op. cit., p. 90.

⁴⁴ Hunt, op. cit., p. 66.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

Rome.⁴⁶ As the Roman Empire fell away from its zenith, the Church took over more and more authority in the life of the individual. But the Church was not always consistent in its attitude toward marriage. On one hand, the Church sought to sanctify marriage; on the other, it came to discourage marriage by insisting on a celibate clergy.⁴⁷

As the Dark Ages closed in on Western Europe, the emancipation of women came to an end.⁴⁸ Barbarians made inroads into the Empire and civil war added to the disruption. Teutonic customs, more primitive and patriarchal than those of the later Roman Empire, gradually fused with Christianity, itself highly patriarchal.⁴⁹ This return to male domination along with a return to primitive economic conditions effected a reversal in the status of women which awaited the Renaissance to alleviate.

⁴⁶Ludwig Friendlander, Roman Life And Manners Under The Early Empire, Trans, A.B. Gough (seventh edition; New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1965), p. 129.

⁴⁷A. Abram, English Life And Manners In The Later Middle Ages (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1913), p. 116.

⁴⁸Hunt, op. cit., p. 124.

⁴⁹Vide footnote 1.

CHAPTER II

CHURCH RESTRICTIONS AND PROHIBITIONS

The medieval Church gradually came to regard marriage as a sacrament, but it never came to accept the institution as wholly desirable.¹ In assuming the regulation of marriage, the Church put forth some requirements and restrictions on who could marry and who could not marry. Among the conditions of marriage controlled by the Church was incest, which was applied to in-laws and god-relations as well as blood ties. Other conditions of marriage eyed by the Church were sexual behavior, within and without marriage; associations with the devil; clerical celibacy, only gradually coming to be enforced; and most important of all, monogamous marriage. The last condition was not only consistent with the cultures of Western civilizations, prior to the rise of Christianity, but emphasized its duration for a lifetime.

To interpret the Church's position regarding marriage, one must rely on the writings of the Church fathers, feudal records, and other accounts of human behavior. One fact that stands along with monogamy

¹A. Abram, English Life and Manners in the Later Middle Ages (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1913), p. 116.

and permanence in the medieval marriage pattern is that of patriarchal authority. Yet the Greco-Roman patriarchal pattern was softened somewhat by the humanitarian influence of Christianity in the Middle Ages.

The structure of medieval society with its attendant class stratification, including serfdom, naturally affected patriarchal authority within each class. For example, a nobleman might exercise almost complete control over the property or dowry of his wife and even exert great influence over the marriage of his children. A serf, however, might find himself, his wife, and his children more under the immediate control of his lord than under his own control. If he had secured the permission of the lords involved to marry off the manor and had so done, he could on some manors be powerless to stop his children from being divided between the two lords as chattels. Although what has been said in this paragraph might well be suited for elsewhere, the point intended here is that medieval society was strongly patriarchal and strongly authoritarian, as was the Church, which strongly influenced a society receptive to its teachings.

I. INCEST

The medieval Church attempted to prevent incest as well as marriages with Jews or heretics or others of a heathenish nature.²

²Alexander Flick, The Rise of the Medieval Church, (New York: Burt Franklin, 1909), p. 356.

The prohibition against incest was particularly strong and was applied to godson or godfather relations as well as to blood ties.³ The making of marriages between in-laws, such as might occur when a man married his deceased wife's sister, were prohibited. This taboo has survived in England.⁴

According to William Graham Sumner, nonblood marital ties, although prohibited, did not constitute incest.⁵ Canon Law from early times had forbidden marriages between couples who were related to the seventh degree, which prohibited marriages by those having a "common great-great-great-great-great-grandfather." Innocent III in the great Lateran council of 1215, realizing the impracticality of keeping the law, secured a reduction on prohibitions to the fourth degree "because they cannot now be kept without grievous harm."⁶ In other words the arranging of marriages for social, economic, military, and political purposes, as was regularly the type of marriage arranged in the Middle Ages, was hindered by the provision of the seventh degree.

³Abram, op. cit., p. 119.

⁴William Graham Sumner, Folkways (New York: The New American Library, 1940), p. 404.

⁵Ibid.

⁶H.S. Bennett, Life on the English Manor (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1948), p. 245.

So many restrictions on marriage in the Middle Ages convinced noted scholars Sir Frederick Pollock and Professor Maitland that many marriages were technically invalid, although contracted in innocence.⁷ Some marriages were not so innocently contracted. Robert II, son of Hugh Capet, sought to marry Bertha, a widow. Bertha had a child to whom Robert was godfather, and if this wasn't enough impediment, Robert and Bertha had the misfortune to be related in the third degree through a great-grandfather.⁸ Nevertheless, the marriage was made by some willing bishops.⁹ As late as 1357, fifty couples were granted dispensations to remain married due to their having innocently violated the incest laws. In 1413, another hundred people purchased dispensations to remain married or to marry, although they were related within the prohibited fourth degree.¹⁰ These figures are comparatively small when compared with even the population of Western Europe in the Middle Ages. But we must assume many more were innocently contracted and never known even to the parties involved to be incestuous. How many

⁷ Abram, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

⁸ Dana C. Munro and Joseph R. Strayer, The Middle Ages, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1942), pp. 182-183.

⁹ Ibid., p. 183.

¹⁰ Abram, op. cit., p. 120.

others knew of the kinship but dared not risk exposure to seek a by-no-means guaranteed dispensation?

In order to help prevent incestuous marriages, Gratian's table of consanguinity appeared in the twelfth century. This picture related ancestors and children for the purpose of avoiding marriages within the prohibited degrees.¹¹

Since in many places much of the record of human history was kept by the Church, it would seem to have been difficult to have arranged a marriage between persons of important social status without securing some assistance from members of the clergy. The medieval Church was not without its corruptive elements.

A convenient way of breaking up an unsuccessful marriage involved incest. It seems odd that concern over an incestuous marriage existed only before marriage. Since rural medieval life in Europe was so static, it was very difficult to avoid marrying within the prohibited degrees of relationship. To find an acceptable mate of the proper social class nearly always involved a degree of incest. But should serious trouble develop between the marriage partners an annulment could be obtained on the grounds of incest. Divorce was almost impossible in the Middle Ages, but an annulment was always

¹¹ Anne Fremantle, Age of Faith in Great Ages of Man Series ed. TIME-LIFE. New York: Time Incorporated, 1968) p. 145.

easier to obtain; it meant no true marriage had existed. Louis VII of France obtained an annulment to his marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine on the grounds of consanguinity.¹²

II. COHABITATION WITH THE DEVIL

Another forbidden union--real or imaginary--was that of sexual intercourse with the devil or his followers. The devil could seduce men or women, it was thought. His preference was for women; not just "wrinkled old crones," but also young attractive women, who were doubly dangerous for they in turn delighted in seducing men--especially married and respectable men. In the event that the devil was responsible, at least in the minds of the adulterers, a handy excuse was available to minimize the responsibility for the infidelity. The older witches were not without evil abilities either. They could brew love potions or make salves to spur on adultery or to destroy embryos conceived in such infamous union.¹³ These might also induce induce famine or destroy potency or dry up milk in cattle.¹⁴

¹²Morton M. Hunt, The Natural History of Love (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 153.

¹³Richard Lewinsohn, A History of Sexual Customs, trans. Alexander Mayce (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1958), p. 122-123.

¹⁴Richard Cavendish, The Black Arts (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1967), p. 17.

Intercourse with the devil was to say the least unusual. Younger women might have intercourse with this creature without rupturing the hymen; in any event the infamous union was described as quite a nightmare as the devil's organ was either lined with fish scales or covered in iron, and his semen was cold as ice water.¹⁵

A woman suspected of having been seduced by the devil or one of his male assistants-known as an incubus--was stripped naked and her body hair shaved in order that no evil objects were hidden on the body and probed by the investigators' hands or with pins to determine if the devil had seduced her since the touch of the devil left the area insensitive to feeling.¹⁶ "Innocent" and respectable men caught in adultery might plead that they had fallen victim to a succubus--one of the female assistants to the devil. To blame it on the devil was just a medieval escape mechanism to avoid or reduce the personal guilt or shame involved, although it may have lessened the social punishment at times. Anyone caught involved with an animal sexually might also claim to be victimized by the devil, as he was known to take on the form of a dog, male goat, or black cat.¹⁷

¹⁵Lewinsohn, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 123; H.R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex (New York: Pocket Cardinal Books, 1965), p. 147.

¹⁷Lewinsohn, op. cit.

Almost seven hundred years before Rosemary's Baby became a motion picture reality, one Angele de Labarthe "confessed" to having cohabited with the devil and having given birth to a beast whose head was that of a wolf and whose tail was like a serpent.¹⁸ Perverted activity was also associated with the devil.¹⁹ Obviously, Angele intended this admission as extenuating circumstances for the slaughter of several children because she claimed that the monster born to her fed on human flesh and her duty was to provide it with food.²⁰

One author whose work was examined by the present writer has arrived at the conclusion that genitalia worship existed in the early Middle Ages. This could be closely associated with devil worship, because among some of the phallic worshipers the inverted cross was regarded as the male sex organ, and was used by certain nuns as a substitute.²¹ Both witchcraft and phallic worship are sacrilegious. At the other extreme is found celibacy--failure to take a mate or marry, which slowly the Church came to regard as desirable for all and essential for the priests.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 124.

²⁰Ibid., p. 123.

²¹Abram H. Summars, The Philosophy of the Orgy, (Atlanta: M. G. Thevis, 1967), pp. 64-65.

III. CELIBACY

Saint Jerome, 34?-420 A.D. who translated the scriptures to form the Vulgate lamented his biological urges when he was alone in the desert and found himself given to the "pleasures of Rome" in his loneliness.

. . . how often did I fancy myself among the pleasures of Rome! When I had no companions but scorpions and wild beasts I often found myself among bevvies of girls. My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting, yet my mind was burning with desire and the fires of lust kept bubbling up before me . . . ²²

Among the clergymen, women were both needed and hated. Like Saint Jerome, numerous priests felt the need for a woman. The Church realized the need to contain the clergymen within the spiritual brotherhood of celibacy not only for spiritual but also for institutional reasons.

Saint Paul had seen lust in the marital state and regarded it as a sign of divided devotion within the Christian. For institutional reasons, reforming churchmen saw the need of exercising a measure of control over the clergy. Beginning in the 10th century, the Cluniac reformers saw the importance of having priests who had no family. The practice

²²Hays, op. cit., p. 102.

of celibacy not only prevented loss of church landholdings to offspring but made it easier to support, transfer, and control priests. One unfortunate result of celibacy was increasing resort to concubinage or other and more abnormal diversions from normal sex.

While little effort is needed to explain the need for women, which among the laity was ideally satisfied within the monogamous pattern of marriage upon which the Christian family was founded, some manner of explanation is needed for the apparent misogyny that complicated the ideal for the clergy. More than theocratic interest induced the demands for celibacy.

Among the explanations for this dislike of women fostered by the clergy there was the fall of Adam. This was attributed to a woman Eve.²³ Then there were the writings of Saint Paul. He apparently believed man was a better Christian if he were indeed Christlike--celibate. He is also believed to have contributed by his epistles to the general disregard for women as creatures of defilement and uncleanness. This belief was a strong one in the medieval Church's attitude toward women.²⁴ For a woman to enter the medieval Church during menstruation was regarded as a sin.²⁵

²³Genesis 3:17.

²⁴Hays, op. cit., p. 97.

²⁵Ibid., p. 102-103.

The patriarchal pattern of medieval socio economic society also deemphasized the importance of women, and we can assume that it helped to contribute to a feeling of superiority and aloofness in some males. These factors combined with the hereditary concern for property to induce some feelings of misogyny. However great was medieval misogyny, the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God was exempt.²⁶ In fact, emphasis on the Virgin in medieval worship proved to be an important countervoice to medieval misogyny.

One writer does not attach undue importance to St. Paul as the author of Biblical and medieval misogyny, because that apostle laid down rules for elders which specified that, in addition to other attributes, they had to be husbands of one wife and fathers of children.²⁷ That writer believes "it was only considered unseemly for men who had been consecrated priests to marry afterwards" until the fourth century, among the lower clergy.²⁸ Although St. Paul regarded celibacy as highly favorable, there were practical reasons to explain the special need for celibacy among missionaries.

Celibacy was slow to take root in the lives of the lower clergymen. The Council of Trullo maintained the custom of allowing married priests

²⁶Ibid., p. 97.

²⁷Timothy 3:2; 3:4.

²⁸Hays, loc. cit.

to remain with their families. Apparently this council was not of great importance as it is not listed with the councils of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Council of Trullo advanced the cause of celibacy by requiring that priests marrying after ordination should be removed from the priesthood and by requiring consecrated bishops to put away their wives.²⁹

The movement for celibacy, which began in the West, spreading from Spain upward into France and downward into Italy, was encouraged by monastic orders in the West but was slow to be accepted in the East.³⁰

Perhaps the fact that oriental fondness for women existed in the East influenced the reception of celibacy there.

In the eleventh century, the movement for a celibate clergy gained momentum. Benedict VIII, in 1018 had the children fathered by the clergy made serfs of the Church and followed this action by equating the clergymen's wives with concubines. Pope Leo IX made infraction of the celibate rule of a heresy. And a council in 1059 prohibited the laity from receiving mass from a priest who lived with a woman. By 1074, Gregory VII, although the Church forbade divorce, required that the priests oust their wives from under their roofs.³¹ This was the end of the continent marriage for the clergy, who were then required

²⁹Ibid., p. 118

³⁰Ibid., pp. 118-119.

³¹Ibid., p. 119.

to put away the wives they had been living with in a nonsexual union. Only in the Eastern Church was the practice continued of allowing the priests to marry before ordination; this right they have retained into the twentieth century.³² In the West, celibacy was not easily enforced. Gregory VII was better able to enforce the rule around Rome than elsewhere.³³ Out of sight, this unnatural rule was often put out of mind.

Concubinage increased as celibacy was enforced. Bishop Boniface (675-754?); the Venerable Bede, English historian and Benedictine monk (673?-735); and the tenth century Bishop of Verona, Ratherius, among others, left records on the increase of concubinage under celibacy.³⁴ As late as the 1530's, the inquisitors of Thomas Cromwell in their inquiry into the monasteries of England on the behalf of Henry VIII complained of vice and corruption that they found.³⁵ Renaissance Popes such as Alexander VI were not known for their sexual restraint.³⁶ So common indeed was the infraction of the celibate rule that ultimately the German word "pfaffenkind," which means priest's child, came

³²Ibid., p. 120.

³³Ibid., pp. 119-120.

³⁴Hunt, op. cit., p. 125.

³⁵Geoffrey Baskerville, English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1937), p. 123.

³⁶This fact is so generally well known that it needs no documentation here. Those serious students of Renaissance life who wish further information on this aspect of papal life may see Burgo Partridge's A History of Orgies, Chapter V.

to be used in reference to any illegitimate children in Germany.³⁷ Had Gregory VII forseen the blasphemy that would disgrace the celibate rule in later times, perhaps he would have acted differently in 1074.

Instead, he felt that an exclusive, hereditary caste, which would result from clerical families, was detrimental to the perpetuation of the church. It would create another socio economic structure similar to that of the nobility.³⁸ Not only did misogyny contribute to the celibate rule but it also led to several unnatural acts or conditions.

Sodomy was one of these. It became such a problem that in 1102 a Church council had to enforce several penalties.³⁹ There is some evidence to indicate that homosexuality was practiced among the crusading monastic orders.⁴⁰ Hunt believes that a major reason for the harsh attitude toward homosexuality was that with the childbearing function and motivation absent, the practice could be nothing more than an indulgence for pleasure.⁴¹ Certainly there was revulsion because of its unnatural aspects. When one adds to this the negative attitude held by the Church toward even the most natural and legitimate acts of sex it is not hard to understand the extra hostility of the Church toward sodomy. But this alone does not account for all the hostility.

³⁷Summars, op. cit., p. 63.

³⁸Flick, op. cit., p. 453.

³⁹Hays, op. cit., p. 102.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 131.

⁴¹Hunt, op. cit., p. 105.

Saint Paul apparently attributed the failure of Greeks to accept Christianity to these unnatural sexual predilections:

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.⁴²

⁴²Romans, 1:27.

CHAPTER III

A LOOK AT MARRIED LIFE

The theme of this chapter is that of inquiry into positive traits of the medieval marriage. These traits are those not directly related to economic or social factors accounting for choice of mates, duration or success of the marriage, or its economic, military, or political consequences.

Rather, the emphasis here is upon attitudes and practices. We are interested in those generally associated with the personal lives of people in the Middle Ages until the high period, when the courts of love and other innovations came into existence. The courts of love, and their influence on attitudes affecting marriages, romantic love, and infidelity, are dealt with in a later chapter.

Much that we are concerned with in this chapter was derived from data concerning the medieval Church, because marriage became a sacrament in the Church, a sacrament not to be taken lightly. At least in theory, a marriage once consummated was not dissoluble. In those rare cases where it would appear to have been otherwise, in the eyes of the Church, the marriage was never a true marriage. But the exception was adultery; divorce being granted on occasion for this cause. And in

this event divorce did not free one as divorce does today for those separated to remarry at will.

Even before the Middle Ages sexual relations between man and wife were discouraged among Christians. Ammon, who lived in the third century in Alexandria, talked his young bride, whom he was forced by his uncle to marry, into remaining undeflowered, and together they gradually resigned into an ascetic life in the Egyptian desert in which they did not live in the same hut. This form of marriage, known as a continent marriage, is recorded in the ecclesiastical histories and patristic works of the period.¹ Continent marriages with their emphasis on the spiritual relationship of brother and sister in Christ were undoubtedly an early part of the deemphasis on the fleshly world that in theory characterized the Age of Faith, which began two centuries after Ammon and his bride retired to the lonely desert.

Christianity never really appreciated man's sexual nature. On the other hand, Islam did. The faith of Mohammed, which arose in the Middle Ages, was more positive in this aspect of marital life. The Mohammedan paradise was full of sensual desires--houris with hourglass shapes, babbling brooks, fresh fruits and other joys. In addition, in this world Mohammedanism provided a very liberal limit of four

¹Morton W. Hunt, The Natural History of Love, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. 93-95.

wives at one time and numerous concubines. Mohammed and his Koran also allowed the Moslem to put away a wife should he tire of her.²

Islam rapidly made its way into the Christian world, and one can only speculate what synthesis--if any--would have resulted had Charles Martel lost the Battle of Tours in 732. At least for a time, and in parts of Iberia until 1492, two conflicting cultures occupied western Europe in the Middle Ages. Perhaps in no other aspect of their cultures did their attitudes differ more than in their attitude toward sex and marriage. Sex, indeed, was part of the positive approach toward life for the Moslems during this time. Mohammed allowed women more control over their property than was the custom in medieval Christendom.³

Rome was overrun by the barbarians in the fifth century, and the rights of women declined. The Monogamous marriage seems to have been strengthened in the amalgamation that resulted. Tacitus spoke well of the Germans, who except for a minority of the noblemen who practiced polygamy, were paired in one-man one-woman families.⁴

²Gustave E. Von Gruenbaum, Medieval Islam (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 175.

³Ibid., p. 174.

⁴Carl Stephenson, Medieval History, ed. Bryce Lyon (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 52.

Hunt expressed the belief that the improvements in status and independence gained over the centuries by the Roman women were wiped out as the patriarchal resurgence of the Middle Ages occurred.

This was due to a combination of Church and Teutonic attitudes. Whatever the reason, men did not think much of women as equals in the Middle Ages. In the seventh century, a Kentish law proclaimed "if a man forcibly carries off a maiden, he shall pay fifty shillings to her owner and afterward buy from the owner his consent."⁵ Clearly women were possessions, and as such their loss was felt not in the heart but in the pocketbook.

Like domesticated animals, who depend upon retaining their master's favor in order to survive, women too were trained not to wander astray as part of Christian teaching.

O wife, next after the Almighty...and after His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ..do thou fear thy husband and reverence him, pleasing him alone, rendering thyself acceptable to him in the several affairs of life...Ye wives, be subject to your husbands and have them in esteem, and serve them with love and fear, as holy Sarah honored Abraham. For she could not endure to call him by his name, but called him lord.⁶

In the same century as the Apostolic Constitutions, that is the fourth century, Saint John Chrysostom noted the failure of Christian men and

⁵Hunt, op. cit., pp. 124-125.

⁶Hunt, op. cit., p. 114, Quoting a translation of the Apostolic Constitutions.

women to restrain their sensualism at a wedding celebration. The holy reverence of wife for husband was still waiting the subjugation of women that reoccurred during the Middle Ages.

Unbridled sensuality reigns! Those present
seem to go out of their minds! Some neigh
amorously like horses; others kick like
asses! All are dissolute and confused!
No sanity, no dignity! All is devil's pomp,
cymbals, flutes, indecent songs!⁷

And all this at a wedding. At this time marriage was still not officially a sacrament. An ecclesiastical benediction was included in the ceremony by the fifth century, but not until the Middle Ages was marriage declared a sacrament.⁸ As such, violations of the sacrament came under the jurisdiction of Canon Law.⁹ On occasion, especially in the later Middle Ages, the state intervened. In 1017, King Cnut of England "decreed, with the counsel of his witan to the praise of God" that adulteresses were to be driven from the land or be slain unless "they desist and the more thoroughly amend their ways."¹⁰

⁷Abram H. Summars, The Philosophy of the Orgy (Atlanta: M. G. Thevis, 1967), p. 64.

⁸Hunt, op. cit., p. 113.

⁹A. Abram, English Life and Manners In the Later Middle Ages (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1913), p. 113.

¹⁰Arvel B. Erickson, and Martin J. Havran (eds.), Readings in English History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1967), p. 11.

Another matter which had more civil sanction than religious was the betrothal. Some men were inclined to regard the betrothal as binding enough to permit sexual intercourse. From the Church's point of view, one was married or not married, and, even though the betrothal was made on a religious oath, the participants were still unmarried.¹¹

When John of England took the betrothed Isabel of Angouleme from Count Hugh of Lusignan, whom she was about to marry, John did not have to answer to the Church. John did have to answer to his lord, and when he failed to do so, he was declared a contumacious vassal, and his fiefs were forfeited to the King of France.¹²

The behavior of John, had it come to the attention of a fourteenth century English preacher such as John Bromyard, probably would have been attributed to the wickedness of the stolen Isabel. In a sermon, John Bromyard denounced the evil nature of the medieval woman. Evidence of the misogyny of the medieval clergy was explicit in the speech.¹³

¹¹Alfred Duggan, Devil's Brood (London: Faber and Faber, n.d.), p. 261.

¹²Ibid.: James Westfall Thompson, and Edgar Nathaniel Johnson, An Introduction to Medieval Europe (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1937), p. 485.

¹³Notice the similarity to more recent times in condemning the woman rather than the man for adultery.

In the woman wantonly adorned to capture souls, the garland upon her head is as a single coal or firebrand of Hell to kindle men with that fire. . . In a single day, by her dancing or by her perambulations through the town, she inflames with the fire of her lust perhaps twenty of those who behold her, damning the souls God has created and redeemed at such a cost.¹⁴

Of the twenty men tempted, few were probably as inhibited as John Bromyard appeared. After the twelfth century, the ideals of the Court of Love founded by Eleanor of Aquitaine counteracted the misogyny of the medieval clergy somewhat and gave the adulterous relationship an air of sophistication.

But for the most of the Middle Ages, there was nothing suave about the sexuality of the medieval male. The war and the chase provided him excitement; his wife bore his children; his mistress received his sexual advances; women bore the brunt of his hostilities and were treated as possessions.¹⁵

To have a mistress was not a great sin. The really great sins of the Middle Ages were "pride, covetousness, slander, and anger."¹⁶

¹⁴Hunt, op. cit., p. 147. Quoted from G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England.

¹⁵H. R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex (New York: Pocket Cardinal Books, 1965), p. 104. From a quote by Sidney Painter.

¹⁶Peter Abelard, The Story of my Misfortunes, trans. Henry Adams Bellows (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958), p. xviii. From an introductory statement by Ralph Adams Cram.

Peter Abelard's own reputation did not suffer from his fornication-- although he paid a dear price physically, being castrated. What did hurt him was his theology, condemned by St. Bernard and others in his lifetime.

In the twentieth century, the more varied forms of sexual activities practiced by couples are ascribed by most authorities to the upper classes. Some evidence indicates this was true in the Middle Ages. Note Abelard's own description of his affair with Canon Fulbert's son de niece, Heloise:

Under the pretext of study we spent our hours and were in the happiness of love, and learning held out to us the secret opportunities that our passion craved. Our hands sought less the book than each other's bosoms... In order that there might be no suspicion, there were indeed, sometimes blows, but love gave them. What followed? No degree in love's progress was left untried by our passion, and if love could imagine any wonder as yet unknown, we discovered it. And our inexperience of such delights made us all the more ardent in our pursuit of them, so that our thirst for one another was still unquenched.¹⁷

The love marriage came into wider being following the spread of courtly love near the end of the Middle Ages. Richard II came to love his wife Anne of Bohemia, eldest daughter of Charles IV, and when she died in 1394 not only did the chroniclers deplore her death but

¹⁷Ibid., p. 18.

Richard was moved to order part of the manor house where she died destroyed.¹⁸ Love was not yet or soon to be the dominant motive behind the marriage vows; two years after Anne of Bohemia died, Richard took a child bride, Isabelle, for reasons of state.¹⁹

Adele, daughter of William the Conqueror, married Stephen, Count of Chartres and Blois. He, who was said to rule castles numbering the days in the year, described Adele with a touch of romanticism as his "sweetest and most amiable wife."²⁰ Simon de Montfort was romantically attracted to Eleanor, the sister of King Henry III, who was a widow and presently a bride of Christ and wore His ring, having taken her vows of chastity; but, she had not lost her attractiveness or her flirty ways when Simon married her in his third attempt to unite with a wealthy heiress.²¹ A cousin of Beatrice d' Este wrote the latter's mother in 1491 that Signor Lodovico Sforza, Beatrice's husband, found Beatrice very desirable. The cousin wrote that Beatrice was "affectionately caressed and petted by her husband, who seems to find his sole delight in giving her every possible pleasure

¹⁸Anthony Steel, Richard II (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1962), pp. 109 and 203.

¹⁹Ibid., pp 110 and 203.

²⁰Marshall W. Baldwin (ed.), A History of the Crusades (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955) Vol. I, p. 277. This did not keep her from giving him a rough reception. When he deserted the first crusade, she made him go back to the East.

²¹Charles Bemont, Simon De Montfort (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930,) p. 55.

and amusement."²² This of course is not surprising in the more sophisticated Italian Renaissance society of the time.

A popular tale of medieval English life is that of Lady Godiva (1040-80), wife of Leofric, Earl of Mercia. Nine hundred years ago this lady rode nude through the city of Coventry, supposedly to secure a reduction in taxes for the citizens of that town. She apparently valued a reduction of taxes for the citizens more than her modesty and has been applauded for it ever since. Her husband, on the other hand, apparently enjoyed showing her off, for he could have reduced taxes without her naked ride, if he had desired. The Roman emperor Caligula also showed his wife off in the nude before his court. In both men the elements of jealousy and romantic possessiveness were weak. Although the motivations for the actions of Leofric or Caligula are uncertain, there was probably an element of pride in their exhibitions, perhaps mingled with the feeling that their exalted political power would prevent anybody having aggressive sexual ambitions.

The synonym for voyeurism, "peeping Tom," seems to have originated with the incident of Godiva's ride. A tailor named Tom who, alone among the citizens, peeped at the bare rider, has immortalized

²²Julia Cartwright, Beatrice d'Este (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1928), pp. 77-78.

himself. Roger of Wendover in Flores Historiarum has the earliest extant account of the incident.²³

If Leofric's behavior seems odd, the practice of "coucher officiel" would be considered indecent today. The reason for this act of sexual intercourse in the presence of members of both families after the marriage ceremony had nothing to do with sexual aberrations. In the Middle Ages, a marriage once consummated was almost indissoluble; should a controversy later arise over the fact of coitus, proof in the form of witnesses was sought. If the marriage had been consummated by coitus, no grounds for annulment existed except incest. This problem arose after the death of Arthur who had married Catherine of Aragon but a short time before. His father, King Henry VII, wished to keep her dowry in the country by marrying her to his son Henry. To do this, he had to obtain an annulment, for a widow could not marry her husband's brother, as such a marriage was within the prohibited degrees of relationship. Henry produced witnesses whose testimony tended to show the marriage was not consummated, therefore vulnerable to annulment. Church practices governing the legality and duration of this social institution were all important.

A Spanish version of this "coucher officiel" has survived to recent times. In this Latin country, a sheet stained with virginal blood is

²³"Godiva," Funk & Wagnall's Standard Reference Encyclopedia, XI, p. 4125.

hung out for public observance, after the consummation.

An old Sicilian custom that has also survived till recently provided that if a man desired a woman, he could abduct her and rape her--in which case she was socially obligated to marry him to save her reputation. The custom was dealt a rude blow in the 1960's, after twenty-year old Franca Viola refused to marry her seducer.²⁴

A common legend has it that lords even exercised the "jus primae noctis." This custom, that the lord of a manor had the right to sleep with a bride on her wedding night, is mentioned by one authority as a "theoretical" right.²⁵ In his sociology of sex, another authority pointed out that although numerous authorities have accepted the existence of the "jus primae noctis," there are no legal documents extant to support this conclusion. One notable authority who accepts the legend as fact is G. Rattray Taylor. According to Dr. Henrique, author of Love In Action, the basis for this unusual right was an interpretation that the fine payable to a lord "when a vassal's daughter married" was a substitute for this right among the upper classes.²⁶ If this legend is based in fact, it is further evidence of both the low

²⁴News item in the San Francisco Chronicle, December 5, 1968.

²⁵Hunt, op. cit., p. 146.

²⁶Fernando Henrique, Love In Action (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1960), p. 37.

social status of women in the Middle Ages and also of the property concept that is so evident in the era.

Much has been written on the status of the medieval wife, with most writers portraying her place in society as quite low and subject to the will of her husband, if she was a noblewoman. If she was a serf, she was no better off than her husband, and according to the customs of the manor, subject to her lord's commands. Some women were able to overcome the difficulties imposed on their sex and make notable contributions to society. Undoubtedly this was a difficult task for medieval women. Some achievers were Eleanor of Aquitaine, Theodora, Matilda (Henry I's Queen of England), and Blanche of Castile.²⁷

Eleanor of Aquitaine, the founder of the famous Court of Love, is a subject of the chapter of this work describing the rise of romantic love. If she caused much strife in her family, if she violated the sexual mores of her time--even to incest--she still aided in developing one of man's most valued emotions, that of romantic love.

Procopius in Anekodota or Secret History described Theodora, the former prostitute who became the Empress of the Eastern Empire when

²⁷ Will Durant, The Age Of Faith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 827.

she married Justinian, as coming from the lower social stratum and using her sex to work her way up. She began life as the daughter of a circus bearkeeper. Her greatest sexual feat was to prostitute her way from Egypt back to the capital at Constantinople, after displeasing her keeper, a governor in North Africa. She met Justinian before he became emperor and inspired him to love her and became his mistress. Justinian was unable to marry her until his aunt, the Empress Euphemia, died, because she would not permit her nephew to marry such a woman.²⁸

Often the native people resented their king marrying a foreigner because she would likely introduce foreign customs into their country. Matilda of Scotland who married Henry I, Anglo-Norman sovereign, was well liked as she influenced her husband to lessen the harshness of his rule.²⁹

Blanche of Castile, mother of St. Louis (Louis IX, King of France), exerted great influence over him in his adult years. Both Louis and his wife, Margaret of Provence, feared and respected her. Acting as regent from 1226 to 1236, she, although Spanish, kept the French nobles in line and handed on the royal power to her son. Blanche also exerted such an effort to keep Louis IX from the influence of his pretty

²⁸ John W. Barker, Justinian And The Later Roman Empire (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p. 69.

²⁹ Agnes Strickland, Lives Of The Queens Of England (Boston: Taggard & Thompson, 1864), pp. 95-96.

wife that the two had to meet clandestinely during the daylight hours.³⁰ Apparently there was no opportunity at all for night meetings.

For women in general, what was married life like? Not many women felt--or at least expressed a feeling like Heloise, who said after her painful separation from Peter Abelard:

My love itself turned to madness, so that of its own volition it renounced the only thing it desired without hope of recovering it. That happened when I obeyed thy will and undertook to change my heart with my gown to show thee that thou alone art lord of my body and my soul. . . I sought no marriage, no wedding gift. . . The name wife might sound to thee nobler and more honourable, but to me it was ever more delightful to be thy "beloved" or even--take it not amiss of me--thy "mistress," thy "strumpet."³¹

Both Peter and Heloise seem to have experienced the emerging romantic love. Peter's life overlapped Eleanor of Aquitaine's but she was only twenty when he died, in 1142. The only fair assumption that can be made is that the romantic concept was emerging on its own in Eleanor of Aquitaine's day.

But considering the control that the medieval husband exercised over his wife's property, it is little surprising that wives were often

³⁰ Thompson and Johnson, pp. 503-504.

³¹ Richard Lewinsohn, A History of Sexual Customs, trans. Alexander Mayce (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1958), pp. 121-122.

maltreated--even beaten.³² The chivalrous concept was not too prevalent. And as early as the sixth century, the Code of Justinian made divorce in the Eastern Empire, and for awhile in the West, almost unobtainable; by the same Code, adultery was punishable by death.³³ There was little relief for a mistreated wife.

Women might take some heart in the fact that, except for some European Jews, polygamy was not practiced. The Rabbinical Synod at Worms in the early eleventh century forbade the continuance of this practice, but it still continued in Mohammedan countries, where it is practiced today.³⁴

With only one mate to choose, that choice was exceedingly important. The English King, Henry VII, was much concerned about the qualities of a prospective bride. Under some circumstances, women too could afford to be selective. One independent bride-to-be, when proposed to by George Cely, reviewed his income. This was characteristic, for romantic love played little part in most medieval marriages. With the development of romantic love in the late medieval period, marriage became definitely an adulterous union. Any woman, maid or widow, whose family, social obligations, or wardship rights

³²Hunt, op. cit., p. 210.

³³Ibid., p. 113.

³⁴Edward Westermarck, The History of Human Marriage, (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1921), p. 42.

did not dictate her marriage would naturally inquire of material benefits to be obtained from a proposed union. One woman told a suitor that if she took less when she could have more, she would be regarded by her friends as a fool.³⁵

One writer pointed out that "the frequent remarriage of widows and widowers" indicates that feelings for mates were indeed shallow.³⁶ This is a valid deduction only if one excludes from the category of remarriages those marriages made necessary by feudal obligations.

Even in the Middle Ages, potential brides were sometimes protected against faithless suitors who promised to marry but never did. In the English Early Chancery Proceedings cases of this nature are found. In one case compensation was asked after a ten year engagement was broken to cover "expenses in time of sickness caused by his unkindness" as well as "expenses seeking him in London and other places to speak to him about the matter."³⁷

On the other side of the marriage bond, legal inducements encouraged the widow or single woman to marry even if she could come to terms with her lord or family without making a marriage. In the later Middle Ages, in the Coventry Leet Book, an ordinance was recorded prohibiting any unmarried woman under the age of fifty from living alone.³⁸ Though the main reason for this may have been of a moral or protective nature, the result was to encourage

³⁵ Abram, op., cit., p. 116.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 126-127.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

more marriages. The alternative to marriage was to enter domestic service or be fined for the first violation of the ordinance and imprisoned for the second.³⁹ There was to be no foolishness.

Not everyone accepted the mores of the medieval Church and society in general. Even in the Age of Faith, some people engaged in "wife swapping" and "nude exhibitionism." The Nicolites were a Christian sect that engaged in the former in a spirit of innocence. In some ways their activities resembled the hippie movement of today.⁴⁰ Women of the establishment were found baring their bosoms and applying rouge to the displayed nipples seven hundred years before the topless movement began in American stage entertainment.⁴¹ Many medieval towns had public baths in which members of both sexes bathed.⁴² The medieval noblewoman may have been more modern than has been thought.

If the Nicolites delighted in indiscriminate "indecent" sex, the Albigensians shrank from its impurity. The believers in this heresy that reached its zenith in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were

³⁹Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁴⁰"Anarchy Revisited," Time, May 24, 1968, p. 37.

⁴¹Henrique, op. cit., p. 129.

⁴²Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 137.

divided into "credentes" and "perfecti." Both believed sex was evil and associated sex with the God of Evil, Jehovah. Jesus, who so far as is known was never married and presumably abstained from sex, was a deity on the side of good, and the way for the Albigensians to join with him in the after life was to abstain from marriage, sex, and the eating of any product of a sexual union. Had not a provision been available to perpetuate their population, they would have soon died out. But such was available in the "credentes," who were able to marry and join in sexual union and eat the products of animal mating and redeem their souls before death by a sacrament known as "consolamentum," which elevated them to "perfecti," the total abstainers.⁴³

Somewhere to the right of center between Nicolites and Albigensians was the medieval attitude toward marriage and sex. An official Catholic prayer that survives to this day expresses the sentiments of medieval Christians toward the intimacy of marital life.

"Ecce enim, in iniquitatibus conceptus sum
et in peccatis concepit me mater mea."
(Behold, I was conceived in iniquity and in
sin hath my mother conceived me.)⁴⁴

Reluctantly, with awareness of the need to multiply and be fruitful for the purpose of maintaining a Christian civilization, the Church

⁴³Thompson and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 626-627.

⁴⁴Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 117.

condoned marital sex. Sex for pleasure was sinful.⁴⁵ Naturally sex could not be enjoyed by the faithful without accompanying guilt.⁴⁶ Bertrand Russell compared the situation to taking a drink during prohibition.⁴⁷ Considering the seriousness of religion in the Middle Ages, one would think the guilt much more oppressive. Hunt clearly discerned an ambivalent attitude toward sex in medieval Christendom. Marriage was a sacrament; sex was evil; sex was a necessary part of marriage.⁴⁸

Clement of Alexandria limited coitus until after the evening meal. This restriction served to further cloak sex in darkness. Saint Jerome said in early time, "a man ought to love his wife with judgment, not with passion." He went on to compare an uxorious husband to an adulterer. The medieval Church confined sex to the man-above position, prohibited coitus during penance, Sundays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and certain holidays.⁴⁹ There were several superstitions associated with marital sex. A ritual tying of a knot was said to prohibit the consummation of marriage.⁵⁰ Probably this belief arose

⁴⁵Hays, op. cit., p. 102.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 115; Hunt, op. cit., p. 127.

⁴⁷Hays, loc. cit.

⁴⁸Hunt, loc. cit.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 114-115.

⁵⁰Sir James Frazer, The Golden Bough (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 280.

out of a psychological need of a disappointed lover. Considering the guilt and superstitions surrounding sex even in marriage, and the social economic reasons behind most medieval marriages, is it difficult to see the reasoning of the Countess of Champagne in the twelfth century at the Court of Love?

We declare and hold as firmly established
that love cannot exert its powers between
two people who are married to each other.
For lovers give each other everything freely,
under no compulsion of necessity, but married
people are in duty bound to give in to each other's
desires and deny themselves to each other in
nothing.⁵¹

A primary reason the medieval Church deprecated sex was that for many people no pleasure exceeds the climatic experience obtained in a heterosexual union. Christianity has been a religion of self denial of worldly pleasure in pursuit of spiritual fulfillment, at least in theory among the devout. Partridge asserted that the medieval Church prohibited coitus a posteriori not because it paralleled animal behaviour but because of the satisfaction obtainable. To minimize fleshly contact and pleasure, women were encouraged to wear the chemise cagoule during intercourse as this weighty night garment covered the lower anatomy except for a small opening necessary for the husband to unite with her in sexual intercourse for the purpose of impregnating his wife.⁵²

⁵¹Hunt, op. cit., pp. 143-144. Taken from "Andreas' Tractatus de Amore, B.K. one, Chapter vi, Seventh Dialogue."

⁵²Burgo Partridge, A History of Orgies (New York: Bonanza Books, 1960), p. 92.

As if circumstances mentioned were not poor enough to prohibit an enlightened attitude toward sex, housing conditions further dampened the peasant's ardor.

Several people of mixed sexes and ages might sleep in the same room where beds were less than exotic.⁵³ In the later Middle Ages, the wealthy could enjoy feather filled mattresses on a rope mesh base with a canopy and curtains added for privacy.⁵⁴ Although Partridge described the chemise cagoule worn during intercourse by the more prudent, Durant has pointed out that all classes of English and French societies were inclined to sleep naked.⁵⁵

Sexual conquest was not a goal of very many women of the Middle Ages. Few women had the talent for this that Eleanor of Aquitaine or Theodora exercised. Some women, however, did enjoy more than domestic satisfaction. These numerous wives shared in the duties and obligations of their husbands. Especially was this true in the later Middle Ages. Among the responsibilities carried out by medieval wives were the collection of rents, keeping of accounts, management of property and presentation of petitions. Women also engaged in guild

⁵³Durant, op. cit., p. 839.

⁵⁴J. J. Bagley, Life In Medieval England (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1960), pp. 62-63.

⁵⁵Durant, loc. cit.

work--vending, baking, shoemaking, candlemaking, bookbinding--and innkeeping.⁵⁶

Thus in some situations a medieval wife, like the modern career woman, might achieve a measure of self expression and social attainment, if her husband was of the right disposition. In performing duties for her husband, a medieval wife might not exceed the authority allotted to her. One such wife who did exceed such authority had her legs broken. Her husband, after contracting with a surgeon to mend the broken legs, had promptly broken them for her.⁵⁷

In this chapter on married life in the Middle Ages, it is appropriate to give some emphasis to children. Men of all ages longed to leave an heir. Many wars were fought during the Middle Ages over the right of succession to a throne. In England the rule evolved that the eldest son inherited an estate while the other children were either dependent on their elder brother or else entered into the clergy or the professions to make the best of life. This practice of passing an estate intact to the eldest male heir is known as primogeniture. On the continent estates were usually divided among the heirs. The effects of these different methods of inheritance were to increase the size of the estates in

⁵⁶Abram, op. cit., p. 35.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 126.

England and to decrease the number of the nobility; on the continent the reverse was true. There may be a relationship between primogeniture and industrial development in England. Sons faced with the loss of an opportunity for a good life and the need to earn it back were inclined to speed the development of commerce and industry.

Today children are too often thought of as an unrenumerative expense that decreases the purchasing power of the family for other amusements. But in the Middle Ages, children could be economically productive in an agrarian economy. Regardless of the evilness of coitus that according to Hays reflected unfavorably on women in general, children--the fruit of the union--were considered pure. It was thought that the innocence of children would secure the success of the Children's Crusade. Medieval peasant mothers were inclined to nurse their young; noblewomen were not. Gregory The Great felt it was necessary to encourage the latter to do so.⁵⁵

Discipline for children was the rule of the period. Even royal children were not spared the rod. Daughters who resisted parental pressure to marry were forced into submission by the rod and by psychological terrors such as isolation. A contemporary Italian was surprised by the English indifference toward their children. Children of the lower urban classes left home early in the morning to work. The children of the upper classes left at an early age to go to school. Thus

⁵⁵Durant, op. cit., p. 820.

children of both classes were not prone to develop much filial piety.⁵⁶ But one should remember that in manorial society many children fitted into neither of these categories.

At the age of seven, medieval children were considered capable of consenting to marriage, but a marriage was not indissoluble until the couple were capable of consummating it.⁵⁷ According to L'Ancienne

Coutume de Normandie:

When a female ward reaches the proper age to marry, she should be married by the advice and consent of her lord, and by the advice and consent of her relatives and friends, according as the nobility of her ancestry and the value of her fief may require; and upon her marriage the fief which has been held in guardianship should be given over to her. A woman cannot be freed from wardship except by marriage; and let it not be said that she is of age until she is twenty years old. But if she be married at the age at which it is allowable for a woman to marry, the fact of her marriage makes her of age and delivers her fief from wardship.⁵⁸

In theory a young bride and groom could arrange to marry without their parent's consent. In some instances, one of the parties--especially the bride, was quite younger than the other. More often than not children were married off at the will of parents or guardians, often before the

⁵⁶Ibid; Abram, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 114.

⁵⁸Frederic Austin Ogg (ed.), A Source Book of Medieval History (n.p.: American Book Company, 1907), pp. 224-225.

child was old enough to understand marriage. Two granddaughters of Sir William Plumpton were betrothed in England when the eldest was only four.⁵⁹ A child heir or heiress of a tenant under military tenure might have his or her marriage arranged by the lord of the fief, even against the desires of the child's mother.⁶⁰ Occasionally a young heiress who found the prospect of marriage to a lecherous old man unbearable might buy from her lord her freedom to marry.⁶¹ But child marriages in the interest of property rights were at times rather callous. Grace de Saleby--when only four--was married to a wealthy lord who was capable of caring for her large estate; he died, and at six, she was married to another; and at eleven she married still another.⁶²

Technically such marriages were devices to promote financial interests. Although many may have actually benefited the young girls, it would seem that some were forced at a tender age to receive the advances of mature men who were willing to leave an estate to a youngster to sate a lustful appetite. Probably to prevent this, English laws came to require the consent of the bride and bridegroom regardless of their age. Although the age of consent was seven, the marriage

⁵⁹Abram, op. cit., p. 114.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 114-115.

⁶¹Dana C. Munro and Joseph R. Strayer, The Middle Ages (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1942), pp. 182-183.

⁶²Durant, op. cit., p. 823.

could be voided until the participants reached the legal age of consummation, which was twelve for the girl and fourteen for the boy.⁶³

⁶³Abram, op. cit., p. 114.

CHAPTER IV

EXTRAMARITAL SEX

The principal forms of infidelity available to the medieval husband of the noble class were living with concubines, visiting prostitutes, forcing himself on peasant women, taking a mistress, or indulging in one or more perversions. There are tales of homosexuality and lesbianism in the Middle Ages. In the twelfth century, romantic liaisons were popular affairs. The keeping of concubines is often read about in connection with clergymen.

Writings about the various forms of heterosexual behavior are much more numerous than is literature on homosexuality or lesbianism. As late as the seventeenth century Agrippa wrote unsparingly of wanton women but gave only passing mention to sodomy. The Malleus Maleficarum (1484) omits unnatural subjects in dealing with witchcraft.¹ Seventh century Irish penitentials designated the punishments for "sins with a beast," sodomy, and adolescent mutual masturbation.²

¹George W. Henry, Society and the Sex Variant (New York: Collier Books, 1965), p. 295.

²John T. McNeill and Helen M. Gamer, Medieval Handbooks of Penance (New York: Columbia Press, 1938, pp. 103-113.

One cannot logically accept the lack of written data on homosexuality and bestiality as valid evidence that these practices were less of a human perversion in an age of monastic seclusion. Nor can it be argued in extenuation that this was an age of deemphasis on the normal outlets for biological urges. Certainly if normal sex was discouraged by the Church, a more deprecating attitude must have existed toward perversions. The vernacular term "bugger" was a stigma attached to the Bogomils or Bulgarian Manicheans. Not only in religious houses but also on the crusades--though women were seldom scarce either as camp followers or victims of the spoils--there were opportunities for latent homosexual tendencies to manifest themselves. Richard Coeur de Lion was rumored to be one of these practitioners who bore no effeminate stigma.³ The Knights Templars were rumored to practice the unnatural acts. Yet no one ever thinks of the Knights Templars or Richard Coeur de Lion as having a "fairy" image.

Although many Americans number among their ancestors British forefathers, Americans seem to lack the toleration of homosexuals that British and Canadian citizens have. In our attempts to establish a

³H. R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex (New York: Pocket Cardinal Books, 1965), p. 131.

culture of our own since 1776 we have lost much of our association with our medieval past, and this may in part explain the current differences in attitude about this matter--as well as many other cultural differences. At least we do not like to admit that any of our notable statesmen were even latent homosexuals.

But one should not make the mistake of assuming that a correlation exists between the medieval view of homosexuality and the modern view. A devout Catholic in Henry VIII's day and the same type of person today would differ in their standards as far as Henry VIII's character is concerned. Today's Catholic would probably be more inclined to view Henry's actions in a national sense than in a religious sense.

But there is no mistaking the severity of feeling toward homosexuality in the medieval Church's dogma. Pederasts were denied "communion even 'in extremis' " by the Council of Elvira. Some emperors made homosexuality a capital crime. Hunt has asserted that possibly the act was regarded by the medieval Church as a heresy. The basis for this conclusion is that homosexuals were at times burnt at the stake--a practice used to eliminate heretics.⁴

The conclusion is evident that homosexuality did not meet with social approval even in the Middle Ages. Probably it was not practiced

⁴Morton M. Hunt, The Natural History Of Love (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 105.

by many outside the Church who had access to women. In the discussion of infidelity that follows, the more normal heterosexual behavior is the subject. Romantic love as a popular explosion in the upper classes is the subject of a separate chapter.

About the year 1160, the French poet Benoit de Sainte-Maure in Roman de Troie through the character Briseide expressed the medieval view of the "falsity of women," their inability to remain faithful when wooed by another man.⁵ Future medieval writers enlarged upon the concept of infidelity therein, including Chaucer.⁶ A practical application of this thought or "fear" resulted in the limited use of the chastity belt in the Renaissance in Italy, while much of Europe was still in the Middle Ages.

The chastity girdle was designed to eliminate any chance for the wearer to loosen her inhibitions while her husband was away. The girdle's use further implied the property concept often associated with women in that era. Even in Homer's Odyssey, the concept of such an instrument is mentioned. Aphrodite seduced Ares, brother of her husband Hephaestos, who fashioned such a girdle to end her adulteries.⁷

⁵Hays, op. cit., p. 114.

⁶Ibid., pp. 114-118.

⁷Richard Lewinsohn, A History Of Sexual Customs, trans. Alexander Mayce (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1958), p. 133.

Museums in this country and Europe display such chastity belts or girdles. There was much need for them. Ordericus Vitalis, an early chronicler, describes some women, left at home while their husbands went on crusade, as "callidus" or hot. The use of these belts during the crusades is a matter of general knowledge. With the movement of the crusaders across Europe--away from wife and mistress--that some worried husbands would resort to use of such a device is reasonable.

In the later Middle Ages the Florentines used it, and soon the chastity girdle had spread throughout much of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Some "Florentine girdles" or "girdles of Venus" were very elegant, even having gold ornamentation. The girdle was still in use in Spain as late as the eighteenth century.⁸

The girdle's historic importance lies in the fact that its increasing use coincided with the decline of the Middle Ages and the rise of commerce, especially in the Italian city states. This would indicate either woman's frailty in the face of temptation or that some aspects of the commercialization of society, during the revival of commerce with the Orient, were loosening inhibitions in the fair sex. The use of this "girdle of Venus" to control an already prevalent vice seems more likely to be the situation by this time. Yet the increased separation

⁸Ibid.

of spouses made frequent by the "business man's trip" about Europe and the East in the Renaissance may have furthered the opportunity for infidelity at home and abroad.

The fact that marriage at an early age was common--especially for the wife--when considered with the social, economic, and political reasons behind the union, made later infidelities more likely. The early ages of such marriages lessened the likelihood of premarital fornication.⁹ One can easily see though how this very factor due to reasons of personal preference may have contributed to late infidelities.

Painter wrote that medieval society had two places for women. The wife was to bear the children; the mistress was to satisfy the man's lust.¹⁰

Quite a lot of extramarital sex seems to have existed. Not all of it took the common forms of prostitution or the taking on of a loyal mistress. William of Malmesbury, a twelfth century chronicler, said in reference to promiscuity among the Norman nobility that they were "given over to gluttony and lechery" and swapped concubines readily "lest fidelity should dull the edge of husbandry."¹¹ The poetry of the

⁹Hunt, op. cit., p. 188.

¹⁰Hays, op. cit., p. 104.

¹¹Will Durant, The Age Of Faith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 822.

German minnesingers a century later scarcely applauded family life but aimed at promoting a clandestine liaison between noblewoman and knight.¹² There is poetic justice here in that what is good for the man is good for the woman also. It also indicated a thirteenth century decline in the so called "double standard" of sexual fidelity.

According to Lewinsohn, in medieval society infidelity was more a matter of social honor than personal betrayal. In a contemporary fictional account of the adultery of a nobleman's wife, the lady defended her actions by assuring her husband of her new worth, "My lord you have no dishonor on that account, for he is a noble baron, upright and expert in arms, namely, Roland, the nephew of King Charles."¹⁴

William Stearns Davis also reported less pretension in the adulteress's activity. Davis noted the ease with which ladies received strange men in their chambers while partially dressed, the gossip freely spoken, the improper chaperonage of young women, and the familiarity taken by respectable women with men.¹⁵ Much is still opinion. A recent study into "birth and bastardy" records has cast doubt on the accuracy

¹²Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 131.

¹³Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁴Hunt, op. cit., p. 137.

¹⁵William Stearns Davis, Life On A Medieval Barony (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923), p. 77.

of minnesinger poetry.¹⁶ Professor Peter Laslett of Cambridge University found that the birth ratio of bastards to legitimate births was lower in the 1660's and Charles II's reign than it was during the reign of the later and purer Queen Victoria.¹⁷

Had all other things been equal in the Middle Ages and the era that began with the Age of Enlightenment, one could expect more infidelity during the Middle Ages when the Church with its negative attitude toward divorce had more influence in the lives of the people. The Church's attitude toward the permanence of marriage is based in part on the Bible.

And he said unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.¹⁸

The permanence of marriage insured a place for the courtesan and the prostitute in medieval society. Where marriage is an enduring bond men do not strive to break it under ordinary circumstances. Neither do they look to find a permanent extramarital relationship

¹⁶News item, San Francisco Chronicle, March 25, 1969.

¹⁷Ibid. The plenitude of professional prostitutes in Restoration times, with more professional birth control methods, probably accounts for this.

¹⁸Mark 10:11-12.

that can never be emotionally complete so much as they seek temporary, casual, and even commercial relationships.

The courtesan enjoyed a place at many courts during much of the Middle Ages, and many men of the second estate fathered bastards by these society ladies.¹⁹ At least one English King granted land by sergeantry on condition the landholder took care of the royal mistresses.²⁰

Prostitution provided another outlet for the medieval man's lust. Few men could command a mistress like Heloise or Theodora. Many had to content themselves with common prostitutes or throw themselves upon the wives and daughters of the peasantry. The latter was not too uncommon, according to Trevelyan.²¹

The oldest profession flourished at different times in the Middle Ages. In some communities prostitution was officially sanctioned. Prostitutes--like other masters of an art--had guilds.²² To some extent, the Church realized the foolishness of attempting to eliminate prostitution and undertook to control the institution.²³ Saint Augustine once said, "If you put down prostitution, license and pleasure will

¹⁹Hays, op. cit., p. 105.

²⁰Thompson, J. W. and Johnson, E. N., An Introduction To Medieval Europe, 300-1500, W. W. Norton, N. Y., 1937, p. 437.

²¹G. M. Trevelyan, Illustrated English Social History (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1949), I, p. 66.

²²Sidney Painter, A History Of The Middle Ages (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 229.

²³Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 135

corrupt society."²⁴ History has proven his wisdom.

Unsuccessful attempts were made to abolish prostitution. Then operation under civil or religious authority brought a return to the ways of antiquity. The "Abbaye" was a house of "ill-repute" founded in the papal city, Avignon, in the late Middle Ages by Queen Joanna of Naples. The female inmates were further required to make the prayers and perform the duties of devout Christian women as well as to extend their carnal services only to Christian men. No Jews or heathen were serviced. In general, the Church did not establish such houses; but occasionally a monastic house or convent might establish a brothel. An archbishop of Mainz, according to Lewinsohn, "was said to have as many prostitutes in his houses as books in his library."²⁵

Some towns such as Toulouse, Avignon, Montpellier, and Nuremberg undertook to operate brothels and gave as justification the necessity for a safeguard for the virtue of decent women, who might otherwise be ravished while on the streets.²⁶ "Bordells" (sic) operated near London Bridge in the twelfth century under license of Parliament. In 1161, a law was passed prohibiting inmates there afflicted with the

²⁴ Stan Burnett and Alan Seeger, Prostitution Around The World (Darby, Connecticut: Monarch Books, 1963), p. 81.

²⁵ Lewinsohn, loc. cit.

²⁶ Durant, op. cit., p. 98; Hunt, op. cit., p. 146.

"perilous infirmity of burning," one of the wages of carnal sin.²⁷ A French King permitted his barons to open brothels in his camp on a crusade.²⁸ In 1254, Louis IX, Saint Louis, attempted to eliminate prostitution but was persuaded by the "bourgeois gentlemen" to relent in the interest of protecting the virtue of their daughters and wives.²⁹

The necessity of prostituting themselves probably existed for several medieval women. Women outnumbered men in the medieval towns. This disparity was not only due to the conflicts arising in the feudal society, which tended to reduce the male population, but also to conditions of hard labor.³⁰

Attempts were made in the cities to distinguish the dress of prostitutes of the street-walking variety from the town's decent ladies, and in some places, the street-walking variety were required to wear a short tunica. The wearing of girdles made of gold, loose fitting skirts and even fur lined collars were prohibited Paris' "filles communes."³¹

²⁷Ibid., pp. 822-823.

²⁸Hunt, op. cit., p. 146.

²⁹Durant, op. cit., p. 823.

³⁰George Selbery and A. C. Krey, Medieval Foundations Of Western Civilization (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929), p. 334.

³¹Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 138.

The crusades increased prostitution. Port cities saw an increase in the number of prostitutes. This was a situation somewhat similar to what occurs in convention cities today. The Templars' accounts reveal that thirteen thousand prostitutes had to be kept up in one year.³² New towns were founded as the crusades closed, and whores who had vended their wares on the highways settled down within or immediately without the city walls where they were frequented by the bourgeois, who were often criticized for their visits.³²

But men like Peter Abelard and Saint Augustine before him, knew of the value of prostitution as a degrading force stimulating man to a more meaningful union.

Because I had held in abhorrence the foulness of prostitutes, because I had diligently kept myself from all excess and from association with the women of noble birth who attended the school. . . perverse and subtly flattering chance gave birth to an occasion for casting me lightly down from the heights of my own exaltation.³³

Prostitution did not flourish without meeting resistance on occasion. More efforts to eliminate the profession occurred from time to time as individuals of authority appeared on the scene who took a negative view of the practice. Theodora, Empress of the Eastern Empire, who knew

³²Ibid., pp. 134-135.

³³Peter Abelard, The Story Of My Misfortunes, trans. Henry Adams Bellow (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958), p. 15.

from experience what a prostitute might accomplish, sought to end the profession in the sixth century. She removed five hundred women of the profession across the Bosphorus--which act resulted in several suicides. Charlemagne sought to drive out prostitution, whoring, and adultery by legislation. He had little success. A successor took more drastic action and ordered the practitioners dumped into cold water naked. He insisted no aid be given the victims, but instead encouraged mockery and deprecation. Another form of persecution included the old Germanic practice of chastisement for female adultery. Prostitutes were stripped, hair shaved, and then flogged.³⁴ The early Germans had a practice of stripping the adulteress naked, before the wife's relatives. The cuckolded husband officiated. Her hair was then shaved and she was flogged through the village streets.³⁵

When persecution of prostitution came, it was sometimes selective. The Inquisition sought out only the independent operator who might be a witch and did little to interfere with an honest brothel--provided it harbored no runaway nuns, wives, or sick women.³⁶ Efforts were even

³⁴Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 134.

³⁵James Westfall Thompson, and Edgar Nathaniel Johnson, An Introduction To Medieval Europe (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1937), p. 69.

³⁶Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 36.

made to reform the girls through a "Soul House" founded in fourteenth century Vienna by Duke Albrecht III. Other places established "Magdalene Homes" for those leaving the profession. Pope Innocent III encouraged decent gentlemen to marry penitent prostitutes as a means of reforming them. The sinful woman seeking to repent and live a good Christian life might find encouragement.³⁷

That the Church, strong as it was in the Middle Ages, could not abolish a profession older than the schools that refined the art in classical Greek temples is self evident. That it should try to eliminate prostitution, which was one of the characteristics of previous pagan religions,³⁸ was reasonable. The result of efforts to do away with such a service was to drive it underground or alter its form. When Louis IX declared prostitution illegal in France in 1254, the results were that decent women were tempted to loosen their virtue. This action--which appeared again in the twentieth century--caused the King to yield to pressure from the husbands of middle class women to establish red light districts, as we know them today, and also to

³⁷Ibid., pp. 136-137.

³⁸Durant, op. cit., p. 76.

require that the ladies of the district dress appropriately. Louis' son Philip met with much the same difficulties as his father when he attempted to end the trade. His laws on the subject went unenforced.³⁹

³⁹

Ibid., p. 823.

CHAPTER V

THE CHANGING EMPHASIS OF LOVE

There was more emphasis on love of a romantic nature during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the emotion was refined to the feeling we identify with it today, or pretty much so. The passionate desire for another particular individual preceded Christianity. What does seem to have happened in the later Middle Ages is that romantic love became important in itself as an extramarital amusement. Some time passed before this amusement became an added ingredient to marriage. And even more time passed before it became the most important ingredient.

One name is almost synonymous with the Court of Love. That name is Eleanor of Aquitaine. However, it was her grandfather, William IX, Duke of Aquitaine, who provided Eleanor with a crude example of the joys to be had in an extramarital emotionally based relationship. Married as he was, William IX openly took as mistress an attractive viscountess of Chatellerault, and when the bald bishop of Angouleme attempted to discourage his open living with the woman, William replied, "I will repudiate the Viscountess as soon as your hair requires a comb."¹ Thus William proceeded to demonstrate his

¹Will Durant, The Age Of Faith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 1036.

fondness for his paramour.

The Viscountess de Chatellerault was Eleanor's grandmother. The Viscountess was also wife of a vassal of William's. In abducting her, the count of Poitou violated the medieval contract between lord and vassal. This contract included a commitment by the overlord to honor his vassal's wife and daughters.

Shortly after the death of her father, Eleanor was married to Louis Capet by her feudal overlord, Louis The Fat, who married her to his son, the heir to France, so that her property of Aquitaine and Poitou might be added to his own.² Loveless marriages for such a purpose as increasing wealth and power were in the ordinary manner of uniting couples in the Middle Ages.

To say that the couple were compatible in the sexual sphere would be a mistake. Eleanor herself implied this by stating that the king she thought she was marrying turned out to be a monk.³ Eleanor fell under oriental influence while on the Second Crusade with her husband, a pious religious fellow. Chroniclers attributed several affairs to her adventures while there--one of which was the seduction of Saladin.⁴

²Morton M. Hunt, The Natural History Of Love (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 152.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 153.

More recent historians do not credit Saladin as being the one of the same name who led the Moslem forces.⁵ She was also rumored to have seduced her uncle Raymond, Prince of Antioch.⁶

In 1152, Louis was able to have the marriage annulled on the grounds of consanguinity after he tired of her adulteries, failure to deliver sons, and her intrigues with Henry II of England.⁷ Louis Capet sought an annulment rather than a divorce because a divorce under the circumstances would not have permitted him to remarry, and he did want to leave a male heir. To annul the marriage on the grounds of incest as he did made the marriage non-existent--as though it had never been.

Eleanor bore five sons and five daughters by her two husbands. Her two daughters born first, Marie and Adele, were fathered by Louis VII of France. The others were the fruit of her marriage to Henry II of England. But Henry II did not confine his love making to his queen, having many mistresses.⁸ Of these perhaps the most romantic was Rosamond Clifford.

The Court of Love, one of the most interesting aspects of Eleanor's

⁵Henry Smith Williams (ed.), The Historian's History Of The World (New York: The Outlook Company, 1904), XVIII, p. 258.

⁶Hunt, op. cit., p. 153.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 154.

life, began to be held in 1171 at Poitiers. There she was joined by her daughter by Louis VII, Marie. Questions arose about love and marriage which the many young people in attendance wished answered.⁹

Because of Eleanor's bitterness at her husband's many infidelities, as well as his domination of his sons, Eleanor encouraged the latter to stand up for their rights. She encouraged her nobility to side with them. King Louis VII of France took their side. As a result, Henry seized her in 1174. She spent fifteen years in confinement as punishment for her folly while Henry amused himself with Fair Rosamond.¹⁰ When Henry died, Eleanor emerged as regent of England during the absence of her son, Richard Coeur de Lion, who was on a crusade. Eleanor died at eighty-three and was buried next to her son Richard I at Fontevault.¹¹

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COURT OF LOVE

Eleanor was past her prime before she began to promote the kind of love she and her grandfather had practiced.¹² The ideas and emotions embodied in the Court of Love at Poitiers represented a radical break

⁹Ibid., pp. 154-155. C. H. Walker, Eleanor of Aquitaine, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1950, p. 265.

¹⁰Hunt, op. cit. p. 162; Walker, op. cit., p. 178 et seq.

¹¹Hunt, loc. cit.

¹²Ibid., p. 152.

with tradition and an ennoblement of women. The Church had mused over the concept of the evilness of sex and seemed to have blamed the whole mess on women. Even the Moslems, who enjoyed their sex, had placed women in the twelfth and lowest class of humanity--below thieves and drunks.¹³ In Christendom, when once married to these creatures, one was expected to stay in that condition till death brought separation. This was not always a pleasant task, and men like Gottfried of Strasbourg complained of the conflicts that such permanence fostered.¹⁴

Most authorities agree that the idea of courtly love existed prior to the twelfth century. Literature such as Tristan And Iseult, which contained similar concepts, grew in popularity with the cult of courtly lovers.¹⁵

What many authorities do not agree on is what made the extramarital romance so popular in the later Middle Ages. Also, many do not agree on the significance or endurance of its effects. Hunt elaborated on this point.

¹³William Thomas Walsh, Isabella Of Spain (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1930), p. 248.

¹⁴Richard Lewinsohn, A History Of Sexual Customs, trans. Alexander Mayce (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1958), p. 131.

¹⁵Roger Sherman Loomis & Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romances (New York: The Modern Library, n. d.), p. 90.

Some have seen it as a mere passing foolishness and an amusement of the aristocracy; others have found it a diabolically clever disguise of the undying Manichean heresy. Some have viewed it as a quaint but important chapter in social history; others as a poisonous ethic that has corrupted morals and marriage ever since; and still others as the origin of modern romantic love and a huge forward stroke in human relationships that has set our millenium and our part of the world permanently apart from the western past and the oriental present.¹⁶

One authority also believes that the stigma attached to lust in the Middle Ages prevented the possibility of love and lust bearing fruit in the marriage bond. Keeping in mind the social economic reasons surrounding marriage at that time and also remembering the religious deprecation of sex that existed, one can see how love might better have risen outside the holy union. Romantic love in the twelfth century was ennobling. It made a man a better man and a knight a better knight.¹⁷ It could also be that knighthood and man himself needed such an impetus.

Sidney Painter saw the Court of Love as of little significance and concerned with only a minority of the nobility.¹⁸

¹⁶Hunt, op. cit., p. 132.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁸H. R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex (New York: Pocket Cardinal Books, 1965), p. 105.

Some literary value was also attached to the movement.¹⁹ France had its troubadours and Germany its minnesingers.²⁰ These were undoubtedly influential in popularizing the movement throughout Europe in their wanderings. The wandering troubadour might at least find shelter at the estate of some absent nobleman whose wife was flattered by the attention of a charming stranger.²¹

One writer believes "basically, courtly love is a glorification of concubinage and an attempt to endow it with subtlety and social refinements until it became a delicate game."²² This delicate game was not to be concluded, it seems.

Evidence indicates that even in the northern part of France, where couples approached courtly love in a more carnal manner than the lovers of southern France, the extent of intimacy was often only to lie in bed together naked and no more.²³ Courtly literature refers often enough to seeing the lady in the flesh, embracing, and feeling of her body, but it seldom carries this theme through to its climactic satisfaction. Although there is little reference anywhere to bastard

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher, and Robert Lee Wolff, A History Of Civilization (Second edition: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), I, p. 328.

²¹Hays, loc. cit.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

offspring,²⁴ which would seem to support the lack of a carnal relationship, it is not to be assumed that this relationship was lacking. The infrequency of mention of illegitimate children is probably due to a decent reticence on the part of medieval parents and chroniclers. Most chroniclers were clergymen and forebore to record for posterity the sins of their contemporaries.

One author found the vassaldom relationship of the knight to the noble woman "a mere variant of the existing feudal law."²⁵ One can see this more clearly if one thinks in terms of love as a fief given by the lady as lord to the knight upon terms of chivalrous services rendered.

Some authorities believe that courtly love arose out of social and economic factors. As a social factor they considered the need for something to replace the idleness that existed for the leisurely wealthy. This was especially true because from the eleventh century the Church sought to suppress war, which nobles waged too often as a manly pastime.²⁶

As mentioned earlier, evidence seems to indicate that courtly love was not always carried to its logical conclusion. This was due to several reasons--lack of proper diet which meant lack of energy, respect for

²⁴Hunt, op. cit., p. 142.

²⁵Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 130.

²⁶Hunt, op. cit., pp. 147-148.

others, fear of children resulting from the carnal union, the inhibiting influence of Christianity, etc.

What courtly love did best was emphasize the personal aspects of a relationship. The art of romantic affection with its tender feelings became significant. Fidelity became the rule; fidelity not contained within the bonds of an institution but eagerly adhered to by two paramours for enjoyment's sake.²⁷ Even today some people feel the need for this type of relationship. In 1967, one of the most popular and award winning songs, Gentle On My Mind, expressed much of this theme. In the closing years of the Middle Ages, the bourgeoisie began to adopt the institution.²⁸

The opinions vary as to what was the significance of the Court of Love and its influence on affection as a catalyst in human premarital, marital, and extramarital behavior. It began in the ranks of the nobility--some three percent of the population or less who had wealth and leisure--who seem to have adapted it much as the classical Greeks took up philosophy.

²⁷Ibid., p. 171.

²⁸Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 135.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF COURTLY LOVE

In defining courtly love, Andreas Capellanus--Andrew the chaplain--provided more insight than the accounts of the *menneſingers*. The poems and romances that emerged from the period probably improvised somewhat on facts to suit their modes and purposes of expression. One can agree with Lewinsohn that courtly love had the effects of loosening the bonds of matrimony and strengthening the position of women in society.²⁹ The value and significance of this may be debatable.

Andreas was an observer at the court in Poitiers where courtly love took shape in the twelfth century. Eleanor's daughter, Marie, encouraged the chaplain to record the events that occurred there. His Tractatus de Amore et de Amoris Remedio is the result. This is often translated as The Art Of Courtly Love.³⁰

The Court of Love resembled an actual court in some ways. Mock trials were held and a panel of important noblewomen presided as justices. Up to sixty of these sat on a single case; in some cases Queen Eleanor, her daughter, Countess Marie, and others returned

²⁹Ibid., pp. 130-131.

³⁰Hunt, op. cit., p. 156.

single verdicts.³¹

Andreas drew most of his material from the mock trials held at Poitiers under the guidance of Eleanor and Marie. These proceeded along similar logic. In a case involving a certain knight, the Queen of France, Adele, gave what seems to have been a typical verdict. A knight petitioned for the love of a lady who once promised him that love were she ever to become disenchanted with her current lover. Later she married her present lover. Since love and marriage were regarded as incompatible in medieval times, the knight claimed that the affair had ended, and he was entitled to the lady. Thus before the Court of Love he won his case.³²

In another case, a lord tested his lady's love by convincing her that he was having an affair with someone new. Later he confessed the hoax; but his true love was upset and refused him her affections. Eleanor gave this verdict and demanded the lady return her affections to her lord because he had only practiced a law of love that one party often desires to test the other's "faith and constancy" by such means.³³

³¹Ibid., p. 158.

³²Ibid., p. 159.

³³Ibid.

Once an unworthy knight was transformed into a shining example of his profession's virtuous characteristics by the love of a lady. Subsequently he turned to another. She petitioned for his return on the grounds that his new worth was the result of her work on him and that she in effect had a lien on him. Her claim was upheld by the Countess of Flanders.³⁴

These cases may seem far from realizing the aims of personal romantic involvement today. But they were working toward the refinement of a little used emotion, incorporating honor and creating chivalry. Some did not define it as such. The Frenchman, Marcabru resented "the Tree of Perversity" as he called it.³⁵

Andreas was clear to caution against overemphasis on carnal conquest in the love match. He instructed the man "to avoid an overabundance of passion" and "not to seek the love of a woman who you know will grant easily what you seek."³⁶ In this passage, Andreas seemed to say that the culmination of an affair in its appropriate manner was not evil but that the personal value was related to--even intrinsic to--the measure of achievement. Writings are varied as to whether

³⁴Ibid., p. 160.

³⁵Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 129.

³⁶Andreas Capellanus, The Art Of Courtly Love, trans. John Jay Parry (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1957), p. 24.

sexual intercourse was an integral part of courtly love. Most authorities seem to lean toward the negative position of G. R. Taylor.³⁷ Durant noted a tendency of conscientious ladies to offer their maids for physical service lest their lovers go unrelieved of passion.³⁸ But in the following passage Capellanus by making the point against homosexuality in the way that he did seemed to concede sexual fulfillment had its rightful place in the lives of two heterosexual lovers.

Now, in love you should note first of all that love cannot exist except between persons of opposite sexes. Between two men or two women love can find no place, for we see that two persons of the same sex are not fitted for giving each other the exchanges of love or for practicing the acts natural to it.³⁹

Andreas' thinking is clearly the deductive logic of the Court of Love and characteristic of the logic of the Age of Faith. There is in the above passage a close tie-in between love and sex; one is synonymous with the other.

In several ways Capellanus described love much as an interested observer would today. He realized the need for privacy in love--the secrecy which adds to the mysterious emotion.⁴⁰ He knew of the desire

³⁷Hunt, op. cit., pp. 142-143.

³⁸Durant, op. cit., p. 822.

³⁹Capellanus, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴⁰Hunt, op. cit., p. 160.

to embrace the beautiful that the lover "suffers."⁴¹ He placed character above beauty. "Character alone. . . is worthy of the crown of love." He recorded the need for differentiation in sex roles in clothing and scents.⁴² He described the lover of a nun as an "abominable beast. He cautioned the clergyman against love, but if he were unable to resist, he was warned to seek a woman of the social standing of his parents."⁴³ He believed that a lover should exemplify perfection in his social role. If he were a warrior, his courage should never have been questioned. He saw the ideal of love as the embodiment of humbleness and service. "The sweet and delightful solaces of the flesh" were needed to retain love's interest. Love was not evil, and a lover should not disgrace his beloved by being in the company of wicked men but should seek only to associate with "good men."⁴⁴ Infidelity on the part of a man's beloved might make her more desirable.⁴⁵ The latter statement may reflect an increasingly popular twentieth century idea.

According to Hays, Andreas underwent a change in attitude about sexual life in his later years. He came to think that sex was sinful because it weakened a man and hurried his death.⁴⁶ This of course

⁴¹Capellanus, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴²Ibid., p. 6.

⁴³Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁵Hays, op. cit., p. 110.

⁴⁶Hays, op. cit., p. 110.

was untrue; but it also conformed to the pseudodeductive logic of the age.

Peasant women benefited little from courtly love. If courtly love introduced new respect for the rights of women of nobility, it did not affect the rights of the vast majority of women. A nobleman thought little of raping a peasant wife should he catch one in a convenient spot.⁴⁷ This attitude was not changed by the new respect afforded noblewomen.⁴⁸ The Chaplain noted this fact.

What, for instance, if chance should present to him an unknown woman in a convenient place or what if at a time when Venus is urging him on. . . should he meet with a little strumpet on somebody's servant girl? Should he, just because he played with her in the grass, lose the love of his beloved? We can say. . . just for this a lover is not considered unworthy of his beloved. . .⁴⁹

Andreas did not advise falling in love with a peasant woman; but if this happened, he recommended luring such into the bushes with flattery and there taking one's way with her as she would be too shy to consent.⁵⁰ Rape as a means of treating with women of little respect was rather common in the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century, Innocent III

⁴⁷Hunt, op. cit., p. 146

⁴⁸Hays, op. cit., p. 106.

⁴⁹Capellanus, op. cit., p. 31.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 24.

authorized the raping as well as murder of the Albigenses women of southern France--members of a heresy who among other beliefs denounced the low morality of the clergy.⁵¹ The raping of women on crusades is common knowledge.

Undoubtedly, the upper class of women received new respect as a result of the increase and refinement of the romantic concept of love--even if this were only the result of a man's desire to participate in a new experience. One cannot imagine a courtly lover visioning his beloved as did an eleventh century prose writer regard women. To Morbod, women were composed of a dragon's head, a serpent's tongue, an asp's poison, and a scorpion's tail.⁵²

The idea of chivalry did not die when Henry II came for his Queen. Women were reborn in the Renaissance but their rebirth was conceived in the later Middle Ages. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the new concept developed. Marshal Boucicaut, in the last year of the fourteenth century established the "Order of the Green Shield with the White Lady," which formally supported the code of chivalry. Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, in 1400 founded the "Cour d'Amour" in Paris, which although an academic institution in form, discussed many

⁵¹Henry Treece, The Crusades (New York: Random House, 1963) p. 235.

⁵²Hays, op. cit., p. 112.

carnal matters.⁵³ To the latter discussions, even the bourgeoisie were admitted.⁵⁴

Courtly love seems to have been at first primarily a diversion of the small minority of people who made up the nobility. To some extent the clergy also participated. From these meager beginnings it evolved into the third estate (the commoners) because of the increasing emancipation of that group from the struggles of bare existence by time and economic developments. The transferral of these ideas of courtly love to the commoners was due in part to imitation by them of their social betters, combined with the ennobling effect of religious dogma. The Church's permissive attitude toward marriage, combined with its hostility toward illicit love, had a stirring impact on women. Combined with the ideas of courtly love and their effect on both sexes, the result was to fuse romantic attraction into the nuptials of all but a minority of people in western civilization.

⁵³Lewinsohn, op. cit., p. 132

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 132-133.

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN AS PROPERTY

Today's woman hardly considers herself the property of anyone. But the medieval woman could hardly fail to see that her person was controlled by her husband or her lord to such a degree that she was little different from a chattel. The Franks long regarded women as chattels. The Leges Alamannorum of the ninth century provided a fine of six hundred "solidi" for killing a woman of maturity and a fine of only two hundred "solidi" for taking the life of a younger less skilled female. The distinction made is one of property value-- the older woman was more useful to her lord as she acquired the skills necessary for her social role; the younger woman was still an apprentice, one might say, and her loss in terms of property was proportionately less. The compensation, instead of going to the government as in a modern day fine, went to the victim's lord.¹

The Franks also did not recognize their women in courts nor in family councils and restricted their inheritance rights. Adultery was early punishable by death due to a belief closely associated with property

¹Morton M. Hunt, The Natural History Of Love (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 146.

rights that the adulteress was cheapened by such an act. Tacitus, who noted the practical approach to dealing with infidelity, was pleased with the resemblance to the first days of the Roman Republic. No penalty usually existed for the man who indulged in sexual liaisons. The distinction between the two sexes became apparent as the Franks learned the military value of marrying heiresses to form alliances.²

In the Middle Ages, the somewhat pseudochivalrous Ulrich Von Lichtenstein regarded marriage in what seems to have been the typical medieval attitude toward the sacrament. He thought of marriage as the uniting of lands, forming of alliances, and as a means of propagating the species--all of which should be done in a business-like manner and to be kept quite separate from love.³ This business arrangement resulted in women being bartered about without their consent. Much earlier in France, Charlemagne thought little of marrying off the war widows of his barons killed in a Spanish War. This was done without regard to how they felt about it.⁴ This became a standard feudal practice, enshrined by custom, for was not a lord entitled to military service from his vassals? How could a widow give it to him? Therefore she had, willy-nilly, to be married. Her

²Ibid., p. 125.

³Ibid., p. 137.

⁴Ibid., p. 125.

lord had the right to marry her off. And this was often to some supporter of his, whom he, in this manner pensioned. Medieval marriages, in the same manner were for economic convenience, military advantage and for the creation of larger fiefs. They were for the union "of fiefs, not hearts."⁵

In pursuit of proving the property concept one can turn to corporal punishment. Feudal husbands thought little about the social niceties involved when it came time to improve on the obedience performance of their wives and beat them as needed. An unfavorable word spoken by one might result in a blood drawing blow of the fist to her nose as is written of in the Chansons de geste.⁶

Also, in some instances free women were reduced to the status of slavery by marrying a slave. Constantine even ordered a slave who did this burned and the bride buried alive.⁷

In the thirteenth century--what with the new attitude toward women becoming popular--women received some legal aid. The Laws And Customs Of Beauvais required a man to limit the beatings he gave

⁵Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher, and Robert Lee Wolff, A History Of Civilization (sec. ed., ; Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), I, p. 328.

⁶H. R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex (New York: Pocket Cardinal Books, 1965), pp. 104-105; Hunt, op. cit., p. 146.

⁷Will Durant, The Age Of Faith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 77.

his wife to a reasonable number.⁸ Also in that same century, in Villegranche, in Gascony, a law allowed every man the right to beat his spouse--but not to death.⁹

Wherever a woman was married off at will, given to corporal punishment, and or denied certain rights and privileges, that woman has been relegated to a position of chattel, in effect even if not in title, and it was so. Women were deprived of most political rights, with the exception of those belonging to members of the royal family, oddly enough. Women were deprived of equal treatment. In some instances a fine for an act against a man was double that for the same offense against a woman. Neither France's Estates-General or England's Parliament permitted women to represent their estates in legal action.¹⁰ The control of a bride's property usually passed to her husband.¹¹ In some areas a woman was denied permission to practice a profession such as medicine.¹² As mentioned, the chastity belt that came into use should also be thought of as a means of securing one's property.¹³

⁸Ibid., p. 826.

⁹Hunt, op. cit., p. 146.

¹⁰Durant, loc. cit.

¹¹Ibid.; Hunt, loc. cit.

¹²Durant, op. cit., p. 826.

¹³Hays, op. cit., p. 114.

When her legal status was so diminished, her sex so devalued by depreciation, her association with her land and the combined alliance value so utilized, her person so abused, and her political existence so minimized, the medieval wife can fairly be appraised as property.

Both sexes of the medieval serfs were very close to being property. Perhaps most had the right to remain with the manor on which they were born, and this distinguished them from absolute property. The serf could not marry off the manor without the lord's permission, which had to be bought by the payment of a fee known as formarrriage.¹⁴ Merchet was a similar fine in England for marrying a woman on or off the manor. The term sequela was applied indiscriminately to designate the lord's property through his serf and included the children and offspring of his "stock."¹⁵ Children from marriages involving two manors were divided between the lords involved in England. On the continent, the ownership of the resulting children often was decided in each case individually.¹⁶ The leyrwite or lecherwiter recorded in the Glastonbury records was a fine for promiscuity on the part of a serf woman.¹⁷ The reason for the leyrwite was of course that the

¹⁴Henri Pirenne, Economic And Social History Of Medieval Europe, trans. I. E. Clegg (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1937), p. 66.

¹⁵H. S. Bennett, Life On The English Manor (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1948), p. 240.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 242.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 245.

woman's property value was decreased by her actions, and this fee was compensation paid by her.

A noblewoman might have to pay a fine also. In the English Exchequer Rolls is recorded the following:

Hawisa, who was wife of William Fitz Robert renders account of 130 marks and 4 palfreys that she may have peace from Peter of Borough, to whom the king has given permission to marry her; and that she may not be compelled to marry.¹⁸

The famous Eleanor of Aquitaine was an example of how intimately women were tied to their property and pawns in the feudal system. Eleanor was the ward of her suzerain and former husband, Louis VII, King of France, after their marriage was annulled on the grounds of consanguinity--a common ancestor was located in Hugh Capet--after Louis discovered her adulteries.¹⁹ This arrangement left Eleanor needing Louis' permission to marry Henry II of England. When the marriage occurred, Louis fought an unsuccessful war which ended in a truce,²⁰ as Eleanor's property was a great loss, and a threat to the French King if it should fall to such a strong ruler as Henry II. Not only this, but Eleanor's marriage theoretically should have been

¹⁸Dana Carlton Munro, The Middle Ages (New York: The Century Company, 1921), p. 136.

¹⁹Melrich V. Rosenberg, Eleanor of Aquitaine (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), p. 145.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 130, 131, and 145.

arranged, or at least approved, by her overlord and former husband.

But in twelfth century England, the status of women was a little better. These women were able to exert some influence in the management of their property.²¹ And in the thirteenth century, the conditions of English women continued to improve. On February 11, 1225, Henry III clarified the rights of an English woman of nobility, guaranteeing her certain rights. Among these rights a widow was guaranteed one third of her dead husband's land, return of her dowry, and the freedom not to be married off against her will-- provided she did not seek to marry without her lord's consent.²² In France at this time the right of wardship was becoming progressively less significant.²³ Perhaps these were indications of an enlightened concern for women--maybe even a result of courtly love indirectly--but the charter issued at the Great Council in England also contained reminders of the low character attributed to women during the Middle Ages. Thus, one section provided that "no one shall be taken or

²¹Sir Frank Stenton, English Feudalism (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 91.

²²Margaret A. Hennings, England Under Henry III (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1924), pp. 350-351.

²³Frederick Austin Ogg (ed.), A Source Book Of Medieval History (n.p.: American Book Company, 1907), p. 224.

imprisoned upon the appeal of a woman for the death of any but her husband. "24

One can more easily understand the subjugation and subservient roles assigned to women that has existed in Christendom since the fall of Rome until the twentieth century by knowing the attitudes toward women that prevailed in the past. The changes that occurred throughout Europe--both economic and social--which freed women from their feudal status did not occur simultaneously. They began with the unification of kingdoms under monarchs, some of which were influenced by their queens to improve social conditions.

The Court of Love increased the sentimental value of women in the twelfth century. In the centuries that followed, the urbanization of the Italian Renaissance brought with it improved social and economic as well as educational status for women--which had then, as it has recently had in the western world, the impact of bringing the two sexes nearer an equilibrium. But the Renaissance and the abolition of feudal concepts spread slowly; and it was the late eighteenth century before the French Revolution eliminated feudalism in that country. The industrial revolution that began

²⁴Hennings, loc. cit.

in England about 1760 also enabled women to be more independent of men and compete with the latter for economic security. With economic independence from men as well as social independence, women have been able slowly to gain back over the centuries that which they lost to the barbarians at Rome, when it fell.

CHAPTER VII

SOME MEDIEVAL MARRIAGES

A philosophical question of more or less historical importance has been whether man makes the times or the times make the man. This question can be equally perplexing of women. That one tends to think of the question posed above in terms of the man and not the woman is part of our medieval heritage. We are accustomed to think of great events in social history as the result of some man's actions, for seldom has a woman in the recent history of western civilization exerted a revolutionary influence. Oddly enough, in the Middle Ages and in the early modern era several women did exert tremendous influence on their culture. Sometimes this influence was indirect as in the case of Matilda of Scotland, whose influence on Henry I, Anglo-Norman sovereign, was said to have caused him to grant the model for the Magna Charta--his famous Charter of Liberties.¹

¹Agnes Strickland, Lives Of The Queens Of England (Boston: Taggard & Thompson, 1864), I, p. 96.

Matilda knew of the twenty admitted illegitimate daughters of Henry I as well as of his affair with a daughter of the Prince of Wales when she consented to marry him; yet she married the philanderer after he promised to reaffirm the privileges granted the English by Alfred and affirmed by Edward the Confessor.² Not all medieval wives of historical importance were known for altruistic reasons.

Even in the Middle Ages there were infamous wives who exerted evil influence on their times. Such were Brunhild and Fredegund. Sigibert and Chilperich were Frankish brothers in the sixth century. Sigibert married the beautiful Brunhild, and Chilperich, jealous of his brother's luck in obtaining such an attractive and popular wife, put away his concubine Fredegund to marry Brunhild's sister. Chilperich soon longed for his old concubine and returned her to his palace which act infuriated his wife. Wishing to keep Fredegund as mistress and also his Queen's dowry, Chilperich had the latter murdered. Sigibert's wife sought to revenge her sister's death and influenced her husband to attack Chilperich, his brother, which he did, driving Chilperich out of his kingdom and requiring that he give five cities to Brunhild to rule in return for taking her sister's life.³

²Ibid., pp. 95-96.

³Dana Carleton Munro, The Middle Ages (New York: The Century Company, 1921), p. 182.

Some years afterward, Fredegund had Sigibert assassinated and into prison went Brunhild, at which place she used her charms to lure Chilperich's son into matrimony. The groom committed suicide rather than face his father's wrath.⁴ The churchmen performing the ceremony were murdered; Chilperich was soon assassinated; in 613 Brunhild fell into the hands of Lothair, Fredegund's son, and after being accused of causing the death of some ten Franks--all kings--she was tortured, mocked "then bound to the tail of a wild horse and thus perished wretchedly." Fredegund did not live to enjoy this as she died a peaceable death in 597.⁵ Seldom have two wives done more damage to a family.

In the sixth century, Gregory of Tours in The History Of The Franks disclosed something of the private life of Lothar (Clotaire) I, King of Gaul. Ingund married Lothar, and although Lothar claimed to love her, when Ingund asked that he locate a husband for Aregund, Ingund's sister, Lothar took Aregund to wife and reduced Ingund to "handmaid." Lothar's reasoning was "I sought a man wealthy and of good wit whom I might give to thy sister, but I found none better than myself."⁶

Some women whose lives do not conform to the norm in matters of

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., pp. 72-73.

⁶Hunt, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

chastity and fidelity have always been an attraction to great men. Such a woman was Theodora, who prostituted herself from the lowest stratum of society to the position of mistress of a governor of a North African province and from there to the love of the Emperor Justinian.⁷ After she had arrived then she took action to close that route of success to others.

Some eighth century English wives were faced with competition from the Church in an unusual manner. In 756, Saint Boniface accused the English King Ethelbald and his Mercian nobility of living in "disgraceful and damnable" sin with the nuns.⁸ Not all kings preferred to leave home. The King of the Franks and Emperor of the West, Charlemagne, who lived from 742 to 814 was four times married, had at least five mistresses, numerous affairs and favored his own daughters and forbade them to marry. One seems to have borne his child; for when one grew large and plainly pregnant, he smiled about the matter and saw to her welfare.⁹

In 859, the king of France, Charles the Bald, married his daughter Judith to Ethelwulf, king of Wessex in England to unite the two countries for the purpose of fighting pirates.¹⁰ Marriages for purposes

⁷John W. Barker, Justinian And The Later Roman Empire (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), pp. 69-70.

⁸Hunt, loc., cit.

⁹Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁰Eleanor Duckett, Alfred The Great (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 34.

of foreign policy were common. King Henry of Germany married his two daughters Gerberga and Hedwig to the Duke of Lotharingia and Hugh. Kuke of the Franks, as a matter of foreign policy in the tenth century.¹¹

The Church was very strict about religious vows. Henry the Fowler (876-936), in his youth, had encouraged Hatheburg to break a religious vow to marry him, and as a result their son. Thankmar, was declared illegitimate and his mother no wife; this left Henry free to marry the future mother of his two legitimate daughters.¹²

One of the immediate problems that resulted from international marriages--if they may be called that in the Middle Ages--or from any marriage involving people of different cultures, was that the queen on arriving in a new setting foreign to her upbringing might try to impose the ways of her people on the natives. Churchmen looked somewhat unapprovingly on the marriage of Agnes of Poitou to Henry III of Germany in 1043. "Now we see the habits of French folly introduced into our kingdom," recorded an abbot.¹³

¹¹Eleanor Duckett, Death And Life In The Tenth Century (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 59.

¹²Ibid.

¹³R. W. Southern, The Making Of The Middle Ages (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 79.

Sometimes in-laws were a problem. Blanche of Castile as Queen Mother not only exerted more influence on her son Louis IX of France in his adult years than the King's wife, Margaret of Provence, but although a Spanish Lady, she controlled France and kept the nobles from revolting against her Spanish socialization of her son, the French king, during her regency from 1226 to 1236. She influenced her son so much that he feared to meet his wife openly in the daylight, lest he cause his mother displeasure.¹⁴

Medieval women were more mobile in marriage than their husbands. And as such they introduced foreign influences into a culture by means of their retinue, religious endowments, influence on their husbands, etc. that were sometimes strife inducing.¹⁵ This marriage pattern had the ultimate effect of reducing the cultural characteristics of western Europeans as points of conflict.

King Henry I of England had a natural son Robert, for whom he proposed a marriage with Mabel, daughter of Robert FitzHamon.¹⁶ Mabel protested that Robert had no surname; Henry gave Robert a

¹⁴James Westfall Thompson, and Edgar Nathaniel Johnson, An Introduction To Medieval Europe (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1957), p. 503.

¹⁵Southern, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁶George Slocombe, Sons Of The Conqueror (London: Hutchinson of London, 1960), p.131.

surname, that of FitzRoy and made him Earl of Gloucester--which acts pleased Mabel--and she married the Earl.¹⁷

In 1166, Dermot MacMurrough, sovereign of Leinster met defeat in war at the hands of the king of Brefini, Tiernan O'Rourke, whose wife Dermot had took to bed. MacMurrough fled to England where he married his lovely daughter to Richard FitzGilbert in order to obtain support to recapture his kingdom.¹⁸

Tender feeling could linger on even after death in the Middle Ages. John of Gaunt was married to Blanche, daughter of Henry, Duke of Lancaster. When Blanche died of the plague in 1369, annually her memory was reverently celebrated on the date of her death and religious rites were faithfully attended to for her soul so long as John of Gaunt lived.¹⁹ But tender feelings did not build estates. In 1371, John married Constance of Castile and became a claimant to the realms of Castile and Leon.²⁰ He secured the succession to these kingdoms for his daughter Katherine by Constance in a treaty with Juan I in 1388.²¹ John experienced both a love marriage and a marriage of convenience.

¹⁷Ibid. FitzRoy means illegitimate son of the King; as FitzHamon meant the illegitimate son of Hamon. It seems that Mabel FitzHamon herself, descended from illegitimacy.

¹⁸Will Durant, The Age Of Faith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 682.

¹⁹Sidney Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964), p. 13.

²¹Ibid., p. 330-331.

²⁰Ibid., p. 93.

One Lord Brocos petitioned Edward, The Black Prince, to secure the hand of Joan, Countess of Kent, for him in marriage. While on this mission, Edward fell for his cousin himself, and when she said that she would never marry again because of a secret love, he swore to be her mortal enemy, if she did not name the lover; she did, and it was he that she named. A dispensation was obtained from the Pope to allow the couple to marry, and they did.²² According to Abram, the marriage was made valid and their son made legitimate by their founding and endowing two chapels with twenty marks annually.²³

Edward's new bride, although previously a widow was a beautiful woman. At past fifty years, she was said to have been ransomed for her kisses. As a teenager she was betrothed to Sir Thomas Holland for whom she performed the duties of wife before taking the marital sacrament. When Sir Thomas was away on a trip, she betrothed herself to another; but Pope Clement VI recognized her betrothal to Holland, and she returned to him to be a dutiful wife.²⁴

One of the most adventurous marital stories to emerge from the Middle Ages was that of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile.

²²Henry Dwight Sedgwick, Edward The Black Prince (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1932), p. 192.

²³A. Abram, English Life And Manners In The Later Middle Ages (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1913), pp. 120-121.

²⁴Sedgwick, op. cit., pp. 189-190.

On October nineteenth, 1469, they were married.²⁵ The events preceding this marriage were intriguing. Ferdinand was seventeen and Isabella eighteen; they had met less than a week before the ceremony; the royal couple were too poor to pay for the wedding; they were related within the prohibited degrees; and they were a threat to Louis XI of France, who feared the potential power of the union of Castile and Aragon.²⁶ Louis desired to extend his territory below the Pyrenees, and he realized that Isabella's marriage to the crown heir in Aragon or crown of Portugal would pose a threat to his ambitions as both countries were friends with his enemy England.²⁷

At home there was trouble for the heiress also. Some Castilian grandees did not approve of a marriage union in which the authority would be outside Castile.²⁸ King Enrique was her brother and heir, whom some nobles had pressured into signing the Treaty of Toros de Guisando when he was in financial need. By the terms of that treaty,

²⁵J. H. Elliott, Imperial Spain (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), p. 1.

²⁶William Thomas Walsh, Isabella Of Spain (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1930), p. 1.

²⁷Ibid., p. 57.

²⁸Elliott, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

King Enrique was to recognize Isabella as his heiress to Castile and Leon and was not to force her to marry against her will.²⁹

Isabella had as potential willing mates Alfonso V, Ferdinand of Aragon, and the Duke of Guyenne, heir apparent to the French monarchy. The Three estates of Castile desired her marriage be made with Ferdinand, which would unite the two kingdoms. One advisor, Carrillo, spoke the opinion of the people declaring that common blood, folkways, and mores would be united into a nation able to drive the Moors back to Africa and also to defend itself from the territorial expansions of Portugal and France.³⁰ Isabella decided in favor of Ferdinand, and after a fearful elopement, they were married.

It was in this century that the immature queen of Naples, Ferdinand II's widow, received three envoys from Henry VII of England whose mission was to gather information for their king about a possible marriage to her. Henry instructed the envoys to appraise the following:

Item, specially to mark the favor of her visage, whether she be painted or not, and whether it be fat or lean, sharp or round.

Item, to mark her breast and paps, whether they be big or small.

²⁹Walsh, op. cit., pp. 48-52.

³⁰Ibid., p. 52-53.

Item, . . . to make inquisition and ensearch (sic) what land or livelihood the said young queen hath or shall have after the decease of her mother.

Although the young queen rated well in physical qualities, her future finances were not satisfactory, and Henry discarded the idea of marriage.³¹

A medieval practice of questionable extent was the "Coucher Officiel" (sic). When Philip, Duke of Burgundy married the Portuguese Princess Isabella in 1430, he celebrated in public this custom of being bedded together on a huge bed, in this case, 12-1/2 feet by 19 feet. The act as performed by Philip and Isabella consisted of climbing into the bed fully clothed, kissing and climbing out. Later this marriage was consummated in private.³² This was apparently the reminder of an important custom that at one time included semipublic intercourse. With important agreement and estates often part of marriage arrangements, it was very important to know the marriage was consummated. If it were not consummated it could be annuled if one side of the family found the union undesirable. If it were consummated, the union was meant by the Church to last.

³¹ Hunt, op. cit., pp. 187-188.

³² "Strange But True," True, September, 1967, p. 54.

It was also in this century that Frey Thomas de Torquemada fashioned the Spanish Inquisition into a terrible instrument of torture following a disappointment in his love life that drove him to the Church.³³ It was proof of the power of love that was emerging.

Through the cases just reviewed, one can perhaps get a cross section of medieval marital circumstances and problems. The cases given can be combined to form a picture of married life in the Middle Ages. Through the particulars a composite can be realized.

³³Daniel P. Mannix, The History Of Torture (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1964), pp. 59 and 620.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this thesis some questions were posed that it was hoped this work might help answer. It is appropriate to try to answer them now.

To what extent has Christianity been responsible for the traditional role of the wife in the family? Until into the twentieth century most families in the western world have been--like the Oriental families--patriarchal in nature. The patriarchal structure of the Church early in the Middle Ages set an example for the people, and it also fostered the superiority of the male concept while deprecating women in general, partially by proclaiming the evilness of sex. The Church was aided in fostering a patriarchal society by barbarian influence at the onset of the Middle Ages. The patriarchal concept aided in reducing the social economic status of women to that of chattel.

But that Christianity exerted a humanitarian influence also is not open to doubt. The teachings of both Old and New Testaments show concern for one's neighbor be he Jew or Samaritan. And Christianity was quite insistent on the worth

of women. They had souls worth saving, and their services to the Church are not neglected in the New Testament. Because of these teachings, women were never again reduced to the status of being subjected to death at the hands of their husbands. This had been their situation, and that of their children, in early Roman times, and among barbarian tribes. This was patriarchal rule at its most absolute phase.

The traditional role of wives is itself open to question. As one can see from this paper some women were more sophisticated than is commonly thought and were able to achieve much despite the existing negative attitude toward their sex.

Another question asked was this. Were the social and economic roles of women co-ordinated? Were women enjoying a high level of social acceptance in times of economic prosperity and a low level of social acceptance in times of low economic activity? This latter situation seems to have been true in medieval times with but few, although significant exceptions. This thesis had attempted to show the low status of women in medieval times and evidence elsewhere indicates that in periods of economic prosperity women have generally fared well both socially and economically.

Both in Republican Rome and medieval Europe women suffered from a low social status as well as economic dependence. Furthermore, the pattern of prosperity and of social independence has been cyclic. One can break down the cycle. Women generally were "down" in the Roman Republic both economically and socially at the same time. This was also true of the colonial states in the expansionist period of the modern era. On the other hand, women were "up" in the late Roman Empire, The Renaissance, and the twentieth century. This was true in both economic and social status. Oddly enough, even in the Middle Ages some women of royalty exerted great influence on their cultures. But historically it is remembered as an age of male domination. Women seem to have been up in periods of history of prosperity, expansion, and trade as well as times of sensualism.

A third question asked concerned the results of the medieval marriage patterns. To pragmatists this is the most important question. The medieval Christian civilization continued the monogamous marriages of previous western societies. The Church insisted on the permanence of marriage. It fostered the evilness of sex attitude and the subjugation of women--both of which are philosophically and scientifically unsound.

The practice of passing on an estate intact known as primogeniture was followed in England and reduced the number of estates and nobles but increased the size of the estates and the wealth of the nobility. On the continent the reverse was true. Landless younger male heirs may have hurried the commercial and industrial development of England by their efforts to regain family wealth. On the other hand, continued division of lands on the continent impoverished and multiplied the nobility.

Cultural assimilation resulting from the political and military marriage alliances of the Middle Ages ultimately reduced the cultural differences of Western Europe. The short term effect was often resentment.

The inability to extinguish prostitution led to its recognition as a necessary part of a "decent" society which functioned as a safety valve for the protection of "decent" women--something twentieth century society after abolishing it has begun, at least in some European countries, to reestablish. The situation in these countries has become much as the thirteenth century French bourgeoisie feared.

Beauty has always been an attraction in marriage, although it did not outweigh other socio economic or military factors in the

Middle Ages. But romantic love that we know today seems to have originated as well as to have begun to become popular in the later Middle Ages. It also developed as an extramarital relationship that through the centuries became important in considering marriage as an institution.

In regard to loveless marriages, they were indeed common. Although beauty and physical characteristics were important, they were not love and could only have fostered a sexual attraction easily gratified outside marriage in the Middle Ages. Marriages were commonly made to cement alliances, for military protection, and to profit from fiefs. As to sex, women were divided into wives and lovers.

For the concept of the evilness of sex, the Church was definitely responsible. Christianity has traditionally been a religion of self denial and piety. Sex was deprecated because it was pleasurable. Then, too, sexual misbehavior often was blamed on the devil by those participating in it, as a means of partial self-exculpation. This contributed to make it hideous in the sight of the faithful. The Church also discouraged sex for its clergy because a celibate clergy was more manageable, more maneuverable or transferable, and better able to be disciplined. It was an economic as well as a religious institution. So prevention of a clerical marriage was

avored by the Church also. It was thought that a family would divide not only the loyalties of the clergymen but also their benefices, thus losing land belonging to the Church.

Prohibition of incest probably came from Jewish law as well as from observations of its results. Medieval restrictions on incest have survived in part until today and are now thought to be scientifically sound within a few degrees.

The medieval Church definitely was ambiguous in its attitude toward marriage. It pushed celibacy for religious and economic reasons. Yet it saw the need to propagate the species. Clericality, misogyny, probably a product of frustration and sublimation, arose out of the need for a celibate clergy. But marriage was made a sacrament and the evilness of sex acknowledged. Yet the Church at times condoned prostitution to protect marriage. Women were inferior creatures subject to their husbands, but the Virgin Mary was a superior being. Marriage was inferior to celibacy, but marriage once contracted was not to be dissolved.

One can never know the extent of sexual perversions in a given society because these are often considered the worst of crimes and punished the most severely. However, this predominantly upper class activity was found in the clergy and was referred to in the autobiography of Peter Abelard. As for the milder forms of

adultery and other natural heterosexual unions, these seem to have been widely prevalent. Adulterous liaisons were the basis of courtly love. Religious and municipal authorities "controlled" prostitution. Homosexuality was prevalent in monastic orders.

Are people really marrying younger today? No. Often mere children were betrothed and even married in the Middle Ages. The age of consent was seven. Marriages were consummated when the couple were old enough.

Have medieval marriage patterns influenced the structure of modern society in the West through assimilation? Yes. Christianity, although it preceded the Middle Ages and was the official Roman religion in the latter days of the Empire, remained dominant long enough to entrench its ways in western civilization. The Middle Ages provided the opportunity for it to seize control of the lives of the people. It held spiritual control over all and made rules for all. Thus the Church was able to insist on monogamy, which was assimilated from classical Greece and Rome.

The pagan betrothal which preceded the modern engagement was assimilated from the earlier cultures. It was, in medieval times, regarded as the equivalent of marriage. A betrothal of a vassal or vassal's daughter, broken by action of an overlord, perhaps to marry her himself, was a violation of the feudal contract, and a breach of ecclesiastical law.

The patriarchal nature of the family was in part Germanic. The practice of early marriages was found in Greece. Both practices made their way into later western cultures. Political marriages brought together divergent cultures to produce short term tension but, as mentioned before, the long run affect was to make Western Europe more homogeneous. Above all, medieval marriages were for territorial and familial aggrandizement. Much of this attitude has survived into the twentieth century. Many Europeans today demand dowries as a price of marriage; and marriage is still widely regarded as a profitable alliance by members of the affluent classes.

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In America, however, the ideal of romantic marriage finds widespread acceptance. Fostered by Hollywood, the idea of romantic marriage not only satisfies each person's sentimental longings but also satisfies the strait-laced morality of the churches. Nothing less could have resulted in the acceptance of this idea, born in the middle ages at the Court of Love of Queen Eleanor at Poitiers.

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