

sought power in a union of souls, which was supposed to bring them nearer to God.

The old Irish Church had made this kind of asceticism a foundation-pillar of its organization. According to the primitive Christian custom, no difference was then made between man and woman (cf. Gal 3<sup>28</sup>), and both were allowed to take part in Church functions. In the monastic houses, moreover, the priestly monks lived together with the priestly nuns, according to an old anonymous reporter, up to the year 543: '*Mulierum administrationem et consortia non respuebant, quia super petram Christi fundati ventum tentationis non timebant*' (Haddan-Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, ii. 2, p. 292). At the time, too, when the Irish, with their mission, undertook a forward movement towards Brittany, the Gallican bishops found it especially blameworthy in the incomers that they were accompanied by women, who, like the men, assumed to themselves sacramental functions (cf. the letter of the three bishops in the *Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée*, 1885, i. p. 5 ff.); they did not know that the Irish-Breton Church had preserved customs and principles of the most ancient Christian Church.

After the well-to-do circles in the large cities had become Christian, there was developed a new form of spiritual marriage. It happened frequently that rich widows and young women, in accordance with the tendency of the time, refused marriage, and in order to provide a master for their large houses, caused clergymen or monks to bind themselves to them in spiritual marriage. This is a variety of Syneisaktism, but an unfortunate one. The rôles seem to be reversed. The woman had the upper hand, because she remained the mistress of her large possessions, and in addition she enjoyed the repute of virginity. On the other hand, the position of the priest was difficult, and often precarious. However seriously asceticism and the union of souls might be taken, still the fact could not be lost sight of that the priest was a subordinate, and his position may have varied between house steward, domestic chaplain, and spiritual lover. This is the rôle which the *abbé* in France had in the 17th and 18th centuries. At the time of Chrysostom this evil custom was widespread in Constantinople (Migne, *xlvi.* col. 495 ff.); likewise at the same time in Gaul, as Jerome (*Ep.* 117) discloses. It is therefore to be regarded as a peculiar product of Christianity.

The spiritual marriage of the clergy is most frequently mentioned, and therefore best known; so much so that it has been widely believed that only the clergy of the ancient Church lived with Syneisaktoi. And it cannot be denied that the custom, just as in the case of Monasticism, found its especial home here. It stands parallel with celibacy, which, in like manner, in Christianity was not created for the clergy, but none the less became a ruling custom among them, and at a later date was elevated to a law, because people judged marriage to be inferior, and imposed the highest and most ideal demands on the clergy. Now, as the clergy who withdrew from marriage became more numerous, their choice of a companion for spiritual wedlock, in order professedly to live a life of asceticism, was of much more frequent occurrence. And as time went on, the ideal nature of the relationship seems to have disappeared in face of practical motives. Out of the ascetic and the bride of the soul there arose imperceptibly the housekeeper, who was suspected to be also the mistress. No doubt the common judgment on this form of asceticism had changed in course of time. Men's minds had become more alert and sane, and the priest who lived together with a woman was looked on with other eyes than at an earlier date. It

seems, however, as if Syneisaktism itself had degenerated. The housekeepers of the clergy were called *mulieres extraneæ*, and placed on the same footing as servant maids. Spanish synods, about the year 600, even ordered that the *extraneæ* should be sold as slaves, and the proceeds given to the poor (*can.* 5 Toledo, 589; *can.* 3 Hispalis, 590; *can.* 42, 43 Toledo, 633). In the Decretals of Gregory IX., iii. 2, *de cohabitatione clericorum et mulierum*, the concubinage of the clergy is forbidden. In the East the same development can be proved. Even in the later synods the Syneisaktoi are alluded to; but it is evident that it was really a question of female servants of the clergy; and to the Greek canonists of the 12th cent. the name Syneisaktos means no more than the housekeeper of a clergyman. Syneisaktism must, therefore, have undergone a transition. Even in the later centuries clergy lived together with women without being married to them, just as in earlier times; but people regarded this living together differently. In the early times man and woman had taken the vow of virginity, and had struggled in a union of souls to attain the common ideal; in later times the practical requirements of life came to the front. The clergyman needed a woman to look after his household, who was faithful and devoted to him. The natural way of marriage was barred to him by the ordinance of celibacy; but if he took a young woman into his house without marrying her, he was exposed to evil report. Without doubt, even in later times the ideal motives of the community of life may in many cases have been alive, as formerly. On the whole, the development which has been sketched is thoroughly natural. An ascetic enthusiasm which proposes to itself such high aims must, in the course of time, evaporate and make room for the sober realities of the day. Such an heroic ideal may perhaps be suitable as a way to heaven for a few specially favoured natures; but it becomes questionable, and even pernicious, as soon as it is made a rule to be followed by a large class of men.

The different forms of Syneisaktism arose under the influence of social conditions. In the loneliness of the desert, the nun became the maid-servant of the hermit; in the cities and villages, the soul-friend of the well-to-do priest degenerated into his housekeeper, just as, on the other hand, rich widows assigned to their spiritual friends the rôle of steward; and if in Ireland monks and nuns lived together in large companies, that was caused by the peculiar conditions of the Irish missionary church, which was a monastic church. The difference of the forms, however, allows us to see plainly the original form. The original motive was in all cases a religious one—more precisely, an ascetic one; brotherly love was supposed to take the place of the love of marriage. Syneisaktism was the natural product of two opposing tendencies in ancient Christianity. On the one hand, brotherly love, in all its forms of expression, was most highly prized, so that it was declared to be the proper palladium of religion (cf. 1 Co 13), and the exclusiveness of the small and intimate congregations favoured the rise of a narrow social life and close friendly relationship between Christians who were widely separated in age and social position. We can see, from the example of the Irish religious houses, how great an influence the idea of community must have had. On the other hand, there was a strong aversion, based on religious feelings, to sexual intercourse. Marriage was regarded as a not very honourable concession to the sensual nature of mankind, and people revered the ascetics without inquiring what sacrifices they paid for their ideals. Owing to the conflict of social ideals, which bound men most closely with each