

other and yet threatened to estrange man and woman, there arose the unnatural combination of asceticism and brotherly love, which meets us in Syneisaktism. A form of intimate social life of the sexes was created, which was not marriage either in reality or in intention, and was blind to its own dangers, because those who adopted it trusted everything, even the quite impossible, to the power of the Spirit animating the Christian.

Thus it is only natural that it was just the spiritually elevated Christians, the leaders of the communities—the prophets, confessors, bishops, and clergy—who lived in spiritual marriage. In the same way the *uxores spirituales* of the earlier times were always such women as enjoyed a special position of honour in the community as ‘brides of Christ,’—the virgins, widows, or even prophetesses. What they undertook was not hidden in a corner, but was generally admired as a glorious example of Christian love and continency. But in course of time the judgment of the ancient Church regarding the Syneisaktoi changed.

Hermas seems to regard spiritual marriage, in all its forms, as a precious characteristic of the life of the Christian community (*Simil.* x. 3). Irenæus does not disapprove of it (*Har.* i. 6. 3 *sa.*). Tertullian regards it as the most desirable form of cohabitation of man and woman (see above). Paul of Samosata values it highly, and practises it himself. His opponents at the Synod of Antioch (Eusebius, *HE* vii. 30. 12 ff.), and, shortly before that, Cyprian (*Ep.* 4. 13. 14), are the first to express themselves against it. The Synods of the 4th cent.—Elvira *can.* 27, Ancyra *can.* 19, and Nicea *can.* 3—forbid the clergy to have women in their houses, and after that date prohibitions of Syneisaktism are never absent from the Church ordinances. In cases of disobedience the clergy are punished or even deposed. In the case of laymen or monks, strict admonitions are, as a rule, regarded as sufficient.

The different attitudes taken up by the Church on the question are explained by the development which she had undergone. In the first three centuries she had spread very widely, and the communities had in places become very numerous. There were many elements in her that did not take the moral precepts of Christianity seriously. The strict prohibitions regarding sins of the flesh were, owing to the necessity of the case, weakened and modified in the 3rd century. The Roman bishop Callistus likened the Church to Noah's ark, in which there were clean and unclean beasts (Hippolyt. *Philos.* ix. 12). Then such a custom as spiritual marriage had to be abolished,—a custom which, if feasible at all, was so only in small intimate communities, where each one knew the other and all were under supervision and discipline. It proved, however, excessively difficult to root out Syneisaktism, as we may learn from the ever repeated prohibitions, which become more and more strict as time goes on. How very deep the opposition to it went can be gathered from the fact that the later bishop of Antioch, Leontius, castrated himself in order to be permitted to retain his house companion. Yet people were in many places convinced of the innocence and the justice of such a relationship, and even produced proofs from writers who justified the Syneisaktoi by quoting Biblical examples from the Old and New Testaments (Achelis, *Virg. Subintroductæ*, p. 42 f.).

That spiritual marriage was in course of time regarded in a different light, is proved further by the changes of designation.

Tertullian calls the female ascetic, who lives with a man, his *uxor spiritualis*—which is the appropriate name in the sense of early days. Then there occurs the term *conhospita*. The spiritual marriage seems to have been called *ἀδελφότης*. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Antioch invented for the female friends of Paul of Samosata the nickname *συνεισακτοί*, and this name afterwards stuck to female ascetics who lived together with like-minded male friends. The term was carried over into the Latin Church in the translation *subintroductæ* (Roman Synod *a.* 743 in Mansi, xii. 381). More frequently still the general designation, *mulieres extraneæ*, is used.

In regard to the question of the age of spiritual marriage, the *Shepherd* of Hermas comes especially

under consideration. Hermas knows the custom of Christian men and women being united to each other by a bond of special affinity, even when they are separated from each other by all kinds of relationships in life (*Vis.* i. 1. 1); he presupposes that virgins find shelter in the houses of Christian brothers (*Sim.* x. 3); and, finally, knows the intimate forms of intercourse which were usual between the spiritually betrothed (*Sim.* ix. 11. 3, 7). He reports, of course, not facts but visions, but he would not have been able to introduce the situations he describes in such a matter-of-fact way, if he had not regarded them as characteristics of Christian brotherly love, of which he was proud.

The passage 1 Co 7 has also to be considered, since it has been brought by Ed. Grafe into connexion with the question of the Syneisaktoi. According to the interpretation suggested by Grafe, 1 Co 7³⁶ refers to the awakening love between a Christian householder and a young girl residing in his house, who are bound by a common vow; the Apostle recommends that an end be put to the precarious situation by marriage. But, on the other hand, in v. 37 he praises the Christian who, in the like situation, understands how to control himself; while v. 38 unites both decisions. The matter, then, does not concern father and daughter, as has generally been held by exegetes, but is a case of spiritual marriage—the same situation as we found above in the case of the bishop and clergy of Antioch, as we must presuppose in Hermas, and as we saw in the letters of Cyprian. What was so inevitable took place at Corinth (although it was avoided in other places), viz. that the peculiar relation between the guardian and his spiritual bride became too intimate to be endurable for any length of time. According to Grafe, St. Paul advised both to marry, while the present writer finds it more in accordance with the wording of the text (cf. the repeated *γαμίζω*) and also with the supposed situation, to think that he advised the young woman to leave the house and be married to some other Christian. If the words of St. Paul have a concrete case of Syneisaktism in view, such as prevailed at the episcopal court of Antioch, that is almost the only conceivable solution. In ancient times young girls were married without much ceremony, and for a female ascetic, who had had a disappointing experience, a marriage was certainly the best way. It must, however, be granted that this interpretation of the passage in Corinthians is not beyond question, especially as the text is not quite certain.

Lastly, the *de Vita Contemplativa* must be mentioned. This may be regarded as a genuine work of Philo. The Therapeutæ in Egypt, who are there described, and who tabued marriage and sexual enjoyment, lived in union with female companions, just as the Christian monks did at a later date. It is the same combination of sexual asceticism and brotherly communion as in Syneisaktism, only that the personal intimacy between the individual pairs is wanting; the brotherly love is just the specifically Christian factor in the spiritual marriage. This makes it possible to place the beginnings of Syneisaktism in the Apostolic Age. The ascetic cohabitation of man and woman had already had its prototype in Hellenistic Judaism. It can, however, on more general grounds, hardly be doubted that spiritual marriage with its extravagances belongs to the earliest Christian times, when ‘the Spirit’ ruled the community, and the ‘first love’ still burned. At that time the communities were small and intimate, and had had no disappointing experiences with regard to themselves; asceticism made its way into the Church; and so all the conditions for the rise of Syneisaktism were present. This must be so if Syneisaktism is conceived of, as it has been by us above, as