

# HOMOSEXUALITY AND CHASTE CELIBACY

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UNTIL VERY RECENT years, wise people have noted, we chose celibacy as an alternative to courtship and marriage. We did not consciously define heterosexual love as the alternative; we took it as the given context of our chastity. Any other alternative we dealt with by silence and condemnation. But in recent years we have found that simple context complicated by homosexual persons living in congregations. They have brought cultural changes in sexuality into our religious life itself, making us keenly aware of a new and complex context for our chaste celibacy. What changes in our life world implicate this shift in the context of our celibacy? What does the shift imply about our chaste celibacy?

This article answers questions with an exploratory list. It does not argue a thesis about the morality or the significance of homosexuality among religious. Instead, it tries to clarify what great changes in Church, culture and sexuality do indeed reverberate in vowed celibate life and it tells some stories about how these changes erupt in individuals' lives.

Of three larger life-world changes that implicate religious celibacy, this is the first: epochal changes in Western culture's interpretation of sexuality provoke changes in dedicated celibate life.<sup>1</sup> The term 'sex' refers to a cultural hermeneutic, a set of symbols and meanings that allow us to act and interpret our actions. Sex means a set of 'scripts' that every society develops and transmits with its culture. Some Greeks worshipped sex wryly as the little god Eros; some Indoeuropeans believed coitus with temple prostitutes a communion with a god; some Polynesians of an early age felt a terrified fascination with sex, believing genital activity a magical power. In this century, the West has significantly rewritten its scripts, having moved from repression to celebration, from holding sex sacred to flaunting it in advertising and declaring it recreation.<sup>2</sup> The West also now considers specifically sexual maturation integral to human maturation. It has no great esteem

for celibacy and tends to distrust chastity. Cultural changes other than in sexuality have shaped dedicated celibacy, too. Perhaps the most pertinent here would include the new ideal of exuberant good health, narcissism, self-realization, the cult of experience, feminism and the theories of stages of growth.<sup>3</sup>

The second of three larger implications: the development of doctrine and the evolution of ethics in the Church also implicate development and evolution in vowed chastity.<sup>4</sup> Among all of the changes, the one most pertinent here is the shift to greater personalism in sexual matters. This evolving personalism appears not only in moral theologians' work, beginning for many of us with the work of lay theologian Dietrich von Hildebrand, but in official Church documents as well. Vatican II, the first ecumenical council to address sexuality, declared that acts of married love 'signify and promote that mutual self-giving by which spouses enrich each other with a joyful and thankful will'.<sup>5</sup> Personalist perspectives shine out of the most stringent papal documents.<sup>6</sup> Both cultural and philosophical personalism has profoundly affected religion and theology (the current pontiff gave lectures on it at Harvard University). Most pertinent to this article, personalism began fifteen years ago to affect profoundly the way religious perceive their vow of chastity, perhaps most concretely in the 'sexual celibate' thinking that has by now become commonplace.<sup>7</sup>

The third of three larger implications: striking shifts in Western attitudes towards homosexuality, which took it out of the closet and turned it into a political force, run deep in culture and affect even dedicated celibates. These shifts are too complex even to name here but certain phenomena suggest their force. Alfred Kinsey's reports in 1948 and 1953 on male and female sexuality respectively contended that sexual orientation ran on a continuum from totally homosexual through various shadings to totally heterosexual. As Havelock Ellis had attempted during the last century to establish the 'normal', so Kinsey tended in the middle of this century to establish the 'natural', including homosexual activity, by convincing many that he was writing only about what people do and not about what they ought to do. While debate raged about the validity of the Kinsey Report, the West began seeking ways—political, social, ethical, theological—of interpreting homosexuality as 'natural'. One outcome is a plurality of sexualities and deep divisions on the nature and morality of homosexuality.

During the decades on either side of Vatican II, we began distinguishing consistently between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity, and then between a homosexual orientation and a homosexual problem. Social scientists had for some decades also distinguished facultative homosexuality, that accountable by the fact that an individual is surrounded exclusively by same-sex persons, and constitutive homosexuality, that accountable by the fact that the individual consistently prefers same-sex persons in fantasy and sexual contact even when his or her social context is completely heterosexual.<sup>8</sup> The relevance of each of these distinctions to the present context of religious celibacy must be clear. In 1974, the American Psychiatric Association voted homosexuality no longer a sickness and declared that anyone who suffers on account of homosexuality shall have 'a sexual disorientation disturbance'.<sup>9</sup> The psychiatric community continues to debate how the orientation arises and whether it can in every case be reversed. The Gay Liberation movement has politicized homosexuality and particularly in northern Europe and North America has provided a compelling social context for the development of some few religious's expectations in sexuality.

Introjecting and enacting these larger cultural, churchly and sexual changes, religious find that their sexuality can no longer be held close like some secret treasure. Few can remember how it was when celibacy was an object of reverence and awe. Not many of us, it is true, have the experience of walking fresh into a community of younger religious and meeting the blunt question posed to a new faculty member at a school of theology: 'Are you straight or gay?' All of us, however, find that our own or others' homosexual orientations concern the community and the congregation and often enough the diocese as well.<sup>10</sup> We find ourselves, whatever our sexual orientation and whether we have changed our attitudes on sexuality or not, in a truly new context for our chastity and celibacy, new in perspectives, perceptions, valuings, decisions and habitual modes of acting.

.1.

*In 1981, a young religious studying theology met with his peers for a week-long retreat. In their sharing sessions, he announced to them that he considered himself homosexual. Others in the group (to my certain knowledge) had homosexual orientations and remained silent. His peers accepted his announcement and that of another who said that he and a woman friend had*

*'fallen in love', with equanimity. Their directors accepted it, but with less equanimity.*<sup>11</sup>

This man (neither unique nor legion) took the perspective of our day that sexuality is at the core of the human self. Had he no secular tutors, he might well have learned this from the opening paragraph of a declaration in 1976 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

According to contemporary scientific research, the human person is so profoundly affected by sexuality that it must be considered as one of the factors which give to each individual's life the principal traits that distinguish it. In fact it is from sex that the human person receives the characteristics which on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her process towards maturity and insertion into society.<sup>12</sup>

Those homosexuals who have reached psychological and spiritual integration fulfill the conditions of fully human maturing and readily find insertion into their communities and apostolic works. Some significant proportion of them seem not to struggle very much with sexuality. Unlike these, however, the man whose story is above did have a struggle. He had adopted the perspective that his homosexuality defined his self, almost to the exclusion of any other definers (gifts). He also adopted a valuation that authorities consider common among homosexuals: a corrosively negative self-image and self-appreciation. The gay community believes and proclaims that society inflicts this negative self-image on them. Homosexual religious who find the gay argument persuasive are likely to perceive the Church as inimical to their sexual development. When they go far enough into gay thinking, they also perceive religious community life as a wrongful restraint on their sexual development. When he 'comes out', a homosexual religious is almost always subtly protesting that the Church and religion have afflicted him with a negative self-image. Of those whom I have heard, most have been explicit on the point.

Yet the man above was trying to cherish both his vocation and his homosexuality. He found himself with senior religious who seemed either to fear close friendship (as he understood it) or to place no great value on it.<sup>13</sup> He found himself in dialogue with mentors who had matured sexually while fighting to hold two beliefs in tension: that 'sex, . . . as contrasted with the other

departments of bodily experience, is *essentially* deep' and that any deliberate sexual act whatsoever is 'a desecration . . . a degradation . . . beyond the powers of language to describe sufficiently'.<sup>14</sup> As he did not, most other religious struggling with homosexual orientation do not find well integrated senior homosexual friends whose story can instruct their current stressed experience. Yet as Robert Bellah remarked, 'More than laws or philosophical arguments, such stories shape the habits of our hearts by guiding us through example', a sentiment hardly unknown in Catholic religious literature.<sup>15</sup>

Homosexual religious hear few if any stories of a joyful interior and community life except from or about liberated gays. The reason seems to be that successful homosexual religious tend to keep their sexuality to themselves or to open themselves only to a very few intimate friends. Consequently, they hear of integration with homosexuality as its core and do not hear of integration with homosexuality as just one of many determinants of the self. In this climate, the homosexual may well decide that his or her sexual orientation forms the central commitment in life. Many clearly do, so that at least for a time they feel that homosexuality is what marks their deepest identity. They think of themselves first as homosexuals, and not first as disciples of Jesus Christ or as Sisters of Charity or Dominicans or Jesuits. They become religious homosexuals and not homosexual religious, thereby changing the whole enterprise of spiritual direction and even of religious life.

Commonly, these men and women feel a pressing need not to suppress sexuality or to repress it, but to express it. Heterosexual religious often hanker to express theirs, of course; but if their desire causes them conflict, it will be moral or religious conflict about which the West's religious tradition has much to say. A sister will puzzle how she can truly love a male colleague and not offend God; a brother will wonder how it seems so natural to desire a female colleague while still simply cherishing his vow of celibacy. I do not mean that they go without turmoil, but that their struggle is the ancient one of the saints against the beautiful claims of nature. Their struggle is not against culture, with the Church, and about their own psychosexual makeup—all at the same time.<sup>16</sup>

To heterosexuals, culture, the Church and theologians give a lot of help in the task of keeping sexuality focused and in its proportionate place.<sup>17</sup> Not to homosexuals. Religious superiors and spiritual directors find themselves trying to draw homosexuals, particularly

problem homosexuals, to think of themselves in holistic terms and not just in sexual terms. Their task is difficult and compounded by homosexuals' problems with authority (the man above considered his directors' authority irrelevant to his announcement). One person very experienced in formation claimed 'never to have met a homosexual who did not have a problem with authority'. That may be accounted for by the fact that everyone now alive has some problem with authority, if thinkers like Hannah Arendt and James Magregor Burns are correct; but even well-balanced homosexual religious sometimes develop characteristic problems with authority.

I find this difficult to grasp and to explain. Homosexual religious who grow to self-appreciation and live content in chaste celibacy have worked through some difficult cultural conditioning and some equally problematic religious conditioning. They began this process with a feeling of otherness—the young religious cited above began when 'I realized that I'm different'—so that their obedience lacks the strong support that comes with a sense of incorporation and belonging. They worked out their self-definition, their moral stance and the significance of their sexuality to their religious beliefs very much on their own. As could be anticipated, some naturally take this process as a paradigm for all of the processes they have to go through to mature in prayer, obedience, zeal and the rest. Problem homosexuals in particular tend to start in the self, work out their own definitions and interpretations, and often come to choice over against some other or others. All of this clouds and confuses any process of personal or communal discernment, as some mature homosexual religious have testified. And it loads the simple acquiescence of obedience with prickly tensions.

.2.

*Around 1975, a group of young religious juniors were working in a high school in a large city. In their dress, partying and the way they decorated their rooms, they gave unmistakable signals of their homosexual orientations and fairly strong evidences of being active sexually. They had decided on their own, without consulting directors or counsellors, that they were homosexually oriented.*

These young religious had adopted the perspective that they are competent to determine their sexual orientation and preference by themselves and without help. Heterosexuals share this perspective, of course, with this difference, that heterosexuals do not seem to

have to determine their sexuality but only to enact it. Homosexuals in religion, particularly problem homosexuals, seem to have to make their orientation a choice. The individualism and narcissism of Western culture prepares them to perceive basic values and commitments as rising entirely from within the individual.<sup>18</sup> Their perception that neither culture nor theology gives them much help in defining their sexuality makes it difficult for them to value the doctrine of celibacy developed in the context of heterosexuality, which comes at them as not very relevant to the life struggle they are going through. Gregory Baum stated their situation succinctly just a year before the events told above.

If it is true that some people are constitutively homosexual and that homosexual relations allow for mutuality, then, from the viewpoint of Christian theology, it is the task of homosexuals to acknowledge themselves as such before God, accept their sexual inclination as their calling, and explore the meaning of this inclination for the Christian life.<sup>19</sup>

Baum barely adumbrates the bitter difficulty many men and women, including devout dedicated persons, must go through in order to accept their homosexuality as a gift and a 'calling' from God. No one should underestimate the human anguish that homosexuality can inflict, particularly problem homosexuality. One learned and good homosexual religious, suffering keenly, remembered an ancient Greek saying that there are three kinds of people: the living, the dead and those at sea. In his desolation, he suggested the living, the dead and the homosexual.

Part of this anguish derives from the fact that homosexuals, as postmodern persons, value self-realization and feel as strongly as heterosexuals that they must take risks to achieve it. Much the same as heterosexuals, they feel the pressure of the cult of experience to 'try it', and they might feel the pressure more because homosexual irresponsibility promises simultaneously to have little consequence and to help them understand themselves better. Some of the young religious told about above were doing that.

They were making two basic mistakes. First, experience suggests that those who willfully experiment with genital play do not easily maintain their religious commitment. The reason shows in a rather tough remark made by Josef Pieper about all unchaste persons: 'Unchastity does not dedicate itself, it offers itself'.<sup>20</sup> The dedication

of the young religious mentioned above eventually relaxed and they left their congregation.

The sad thing is that some of them almost certainly had no basically homosexual orientation but were confused by homosexual experiences. The story of any one of them might have turned out the same way as a story told by the president of a diocesan congregation: After and because of a homosexual experience, a sister went on leave to 'try to find out who she is'. She had never dated men before entering religion. She set herself to do it now and enjoyed it enormously. But through prayer and dialogue, she decided that she truly had a vocation and returned to her congregation. There, with the help of a therapist, she acknowledged that she had all along been thoroughly heterosexual.

She did not make the second mistake of the young religious: self-diagnosis. This happens, I should note here, not only to younger but also to older religious like the one whose story is sketched below. The decision, 'I am a homosexual', has many meanings in this age of polymorphous and pluralistic sexualities. Certainly the woman living a gay lifestyle means by it something altogether different from the woman living a chaste and continent religious life. The homosexually active priest means something different by it from the adolescent boy.<sup>21</sup> The religious who makes the decision, 'I am homosexual', on his or her own seriously risks enacting a very consequential error. Experienced spiritual directors urge the importance of counsel, particularly after a homosexual encounter (genital or not), when individuals are likely to identify themselves as homosexual erroneously.<sup>22</sup>

Vocation recruiters, novice directors, spiritual directors and superiors (at least in North America and parts of Europe) explore all these matters in professional meetings. It seems that few congregations have decided to reject persons who report a homosexual orientation, though some habitually do. It also seems that many religious feel constrained to keep secret any sense of or struggle with a homosexual orientation. This need to 'keep secret' is noteworthy in itself and full of implications in community life: what was once simply a private matter has now become a complex secret, a very different thing. About thirty years ago, religious congregations ended a long debate about the individual's rights to privacy and started psychological testing of candidates. Now without much contention about the community's rights to its good order and its good name, the novice directors of some few



congregations ask their postulants and novices to share their sexual histories. Directors of programmes of continuing education for older religious seem to be starting to do the same. I find it impossible to believe that the information given them would not affect the decisions they make about novices and older religious.

.3.

*A successful pastor, a member of a large province of religious men, resigned his post. His provincial wrote to each member of the province explaining that the pastor had AIDS, contracted, he wished his fellows to know, homosexually. The provincial's letter showed concern for and compassion with each man in the province. It asked all to accept the sufferer in the same way.*

Some superiors and very many religious would like to extirpate homosexuality radically. They continue to be revolted by the very thought of genital actions or even viscerally felt emotion between persons of the same sex. They feel that homosexuals have done grave damage to the good name of religious congregations. They feel that rumour and publicity about homosexual behaviour has invited casual insults like that in a parenthetical sentence in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, '(To the Church's discomfort, those most able to abstain from heterosexuality may lean toward homosexuality)'.<sup>23</sup>

However, superiors and fellow religious deal not with abstractions but with other persons. In the last decade, communities give evidence of judging that their members, when confronted with homosexual members (including problem homosexuals), can only close ranks and support them. By and large, congregations have resisted the impulse to reject even those who have publicly embarrassed their communities, tending rather to give them counselling and move them away. We feel in no position to enact our moral judgments, partially because of our current perception that somehow the homosexual is a victim. He or she is a victim of a sexual disorientation, a victim of society's and the Church's historical stance toward homosexuality, and a victim in Paolo Freire's sense of the oppressed who have internalized their oppression and become self-oppressors. We may still suffer to some extent from the subtle fear that homosexuality reduces moral responsibility, the myth of promiscuity which all evidence to the contrary has done little to explode.

In any case, the whole problem of publicized homosexual behaviour rises simultaneously with a greater valuing of religious fellowship and community support, so that by and large religious seem to decide that the community must do as the homosexual individual must do: accept the reality of some members' homosexual orientation, perhaps accept problems of the homosexual already in vows, and perhaps even accept the homosexual who causes problems. We seem not to punish homosexuals; even congregations of the *Consortium Perfectae Caritatis* give no discernible evidence of dealing harshly with homosexual religious, possibly because they have tended to hold the traditional silence about sex and to leave sexuality a private business.

Here is a great change in the context of chaste celibacy: a generation ago, homosexual attractions were interpreted in religious terms and excoriated as 'particular friendships'. Religious repressed homosexual feelings or, if they were not successful in repressing them, then they suppressed them. We now accept that some among us are homosexually oriented, and in very many congregations it would be only a novice who would fear expulsion were he to reveal to his superiors homosexual feelings toward a fellow.<sup>24</sup> In some very few congregations, homosexuals are encouraged to an extent that at this point in history seems brave if not brash.<sup>25</sup>

#### .4.

*A religious in her middle age who had never shown signs of sexual instability began to pet the girls in her college dorm and to engage them in suggestively intimate conversations. She explained to her superior that she had never before felt sexual urgings of any kind. She strongly resisted moving out of college work or even out of the dorm, deciding to work through these new sexual feelings.*

Adopting the perspective of our day, religious generally accept that we continue to mature sexually. Many (certainly not all) have gone further and judge that we cannot humanly live the vow of celibacy unless we keep maturing sexually. With this judgment, perhaps, vowed followers of Jesus Christ have begun to address the task of creating our own 'cultural hermeneutic' for sexuality in general and for homosexuality in particular. We are freed to create a hermeneutic by the reality that culture now gives scope to pluralism in belief and practice of sexuality much more than it had in the past (everyone in 1890 was either Victorian in known sexual attitudes or in jail). We are not free, however, to escape

the public consequences of sexual behaviour, which continue more vehement and negative in the case of homosexuality than in the case of heterosexuality.

This suggests the roots of a tension between the good name of the community and the personal freedom of the homosexual. The homosexual individual's perspective may well be that sexuality lies so primordially deep in the self that he or she cannot develop unless sexually first. The middle-aged religious in this event certainly felt that she had met a wall in her human maturation; her experience is not at all uncommon. Her decision to work through her problem would generally be considered a good decision, though its possible consequences have afflicted institutions and congregations. In fact, her superiors and the administrators of the institution were correct to feel concerned about lawsuits. Authorities in one Catholic college faced furious parents and a lawsuit because a brother tried to believe that in eliciting sexual experiences from a student in the dormitory he was dealing with 'a consenting adult'.<sup>26</sup> They severely reprimanded the brother and required him to get counsel, but did not remove him from his post. Superiors in another Catholic college acted differently. They had given a religious priest juridical warning that if he repeated offences which he had to their certain knowledge repeated once already, they would initiate a process to expel him. He did and, with gentleness and plainspoken regret, they did.

These tensions vex the hope of homosexually oriented religious for sexual maturity. They deepen the homosexuals' struggle to value themselves and their sexuality. Problem homosexuals like the sister whose story is told above often feel that they face grim alternatives: either they repress their sexuality as though it were some kind of wrongness in their selves, or a punishment for some unintended sin. Or they admit their desires and admit that they feel obliged to stay in a situation in which they are driven to act on their orientation in the hope that they can 'work it through' to personal, religious and moral wholeness. The consequences of the first course have been sorrow, loneliness and strains in community living. The consequences of this latter course have been notoriety and lawsuits in some cases and perhaps in not many more the wholeness desired. All possible consequences call attention to urgent need to work out our (Catholic) cultural hermeneutic for homosexuality.<sup>27</sup>

## .5.

*A young religious, was inveigled by an older religious to accept a sensuous massage. The older religious gradually introduced the younger to a network of 'kissing cousins', who gave themselves to physical communion.*

The narcissistic perspective of our times encourages sensuous experiences and the individualistic perspective discourages taking responsibilities for others. Religious are in some measure affected by both, and do not seem as clear today as we were a generation ago about the connections between sensuousness and sexuality.<sup>28</sup> Homosexual religious, in this cultural milieu, often fail to perceive that they are acting selfishly when they invite others to share sensuous experiences. Problem homosexuals have often gone further and convinced themselves that their activity is not sinful. Some have developed 'a pseudo-theology of sexuality', as one very experienced religious director called it, according to which homosexual activity is both beautiful and virtuous.<sup>29</sup>

Intensifying this is the way we value community. All religious both value and need community living. Often enough, homosexuals do not feel understood and accepted by the total community and need to have community with other homosexuals. Problem homosexuals in particular feel this need almost as a categorical imperative. Their decisions to create such community, according to the formation director of a large group of religious men, causes serious tensions and serious problems. They are inclined to find community with lay friends whose moral and religious convictions are hardly as strong as a religious's ought to be, and whose lifestyle is often gay. They feel compelled to move to another place or to remain in the same place without much reference to the apostolic needs either of the places or of the congregation. Faced with pressures in or from their communities, problem homosexuals have demonstrated an ability to grow arrogant and a frightening readiness to lie and deceive.

## .6.

How widespread has homosexual orientation and problem homosexuality become in religious life? No one can say, though one superior of a large group of religious men thinks he perceives a network among problem homosexuals, 'almost an evil movement'. On the other hand, the Roman associate general of one large congregation, a native of France, was visibly shaken to hear North

American superiors discuss their problems with homosexuality. So we do not know.

We do know, however, that changes in the cultural hermeneutic called 'sex', changes in the Church's understanding of the word of God and in its disciplines, and changes in the West's attitudes towards homosexuality guarantee that the great changes we have already been led to in religious congregations will not be reversed or escaped. Religious justifiably feel distress at the disorder that problem homosexuality introduces into our communities. We have not all succeeded in feeling compassion with homosexually oriented fellow religious. The elderly among us in particular can hardly help yearning for the days when this burden was secretly carried. They do not see that sharing the burden has made it any lighter. For all that, we have to grasp the truth that moral indignation solves nothing and worsens some things.

Are we willing to commit enough of our resources to develop an understanding of and an explanation for sexuality that allows both heterosexual and homosexual to live in chaste celibacy? Have we time to devise a self-discipline that invites the homosexually oriented to live in spiritual freedom and curbs the problem homosexual from damaging themselves and the community? Can we find out what we need to say to one another and what we may leave unspoken, and how we can explain our chastity to a truly uncomprehending world?

A great deal remains unclear. One thing is clear: some force is leading us to bring these realities into the light. We know Who works there.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The article's author knows little about the East and perhaps ought to note that he presumes to generalize from his mainly American experience to the whole West. Perhaps a subtler limitation: the author is 'he' and has had in fact more extensive experience with male religious than with female.

<sup>2</sup> Comfort, Alex: *The joy of sex* (New York, 1972); W. B. Key: *Subliminal seduction* (Englewood Cliffs, 1973); Irving Singer: *The goals of human sexuality* (New York, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> Lasch, Christopher: *The culture of Narcissism* (New York, 1979); Karl Menninger: *Whatever became of sin?* (New York, 1973); T. J. Jackson Lears: *No place of grace: Antimodernism and the transformation of American Culture 1800-1920* (New York, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> An unusually fine summary of this development as it touches sexuality appears in the study commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America. See Anthony Kosnik, William Carroll, Agnes Cunningham, Ronald Modras, James Schulte: *Human sexuality: new directions in American Catholic thought* (New York, 1977), p 204.

<sup>5</sup> 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World', #49. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., editor: *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York, 1966) p 253.

<sup>6</sup> See as an instance Pius XI, *Casti connubii*, 1930. He defends, in personalist terms and as secondary ends of marital intercourse, mutual help, the cultivation of deeper human love and greater tranquillity in sexual desiring. See also the Declaration of 1976 cited below.

<sup>7</sup> Goergen, O.P., Donald: *The sexual celibate* (New York, 1974) captured the thinking and promoted it. See also Keith Clark, *Being sexual and celibate* (Notre Dame, 1986); and Thomas J. Tyrrell, *Urgent longings: reflections on the experience of infatuation, human intimacy, and contemplative love* (Whitinsville, MA, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> Barnhouse, Ruth Tiffany: *Homosexuality: a symbolic confusion* (New York, 1979); Irving Bieber et al.: *Homosexuality* (New York, 1962). See also the comparative study of male homosexuality in the United States, Denmark, and the Netherlands, Martin S. Weinberg and Colin J. Williams: *Male homosexuals* (Oxford, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> Catholic priests (I do not know of sisters and brothers who were members of the Association) tended by and large to reject the change, which was accomplished by the positive vote of around 6,000 of the 17,000 members. A very small minority, however, had begun contending that homosexual behaviour was acceptable in certain circumstances. See John J. McNeill: *The Church and the homosexual* (Kansas City, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Bishops in the United States, at least, faced with some very difficult situations, have begun letting religious superiors know that they expect to be informed beforehand when a problem homosexual is to be assigned in their dioceses. One religious priest was transferred into a diocese for the first time, and within a year he, his congregation, and the diocese had been sued for a great sum of money because of his active homosexuality.

<sup>11</sup> The events narrated in italic rather represent real events than give their true detail. One hears the same tales in many congregations in Europe and in the Americas, as though human nature were pretty much the same all over.

<sup>12</sup> *Declaration on certain questions concerning sexual ethics* (Rome, 1976), # 1.

<sup>13</sup> We might recall that older religious—including the author—were instructed in their early years by writers such as Joseph de Guibert S.J. how to think about 'particular friendships' among members of congregations. He cited Blessed Angela of Foligno's vivid descriptions of 'the course of such attachments' that begin with pure intention and end in spiritual ruin. He did not cite Aelred of Rievaulx on the support that good friendships give in pursuing the love of God. Joseph de Guibert: *The theology of the spiritual life* (New York, 1953) p 179.

<sup>14</sup> von Hildebrand, Dietrich: *In defense of purity* (New York, 1935) p 12 and pp 36-37. This book was a whole generation's primer on sexuality.

<sup>15</sup> Bellah, Robert N.; R. Madsen; W. M. Sullivan; A. Swidler; S. M. Tipton: *Habits of the heart: individualism and commitment in American life* (Berkeley, 1985), p 329.

<sup>16</sup> Some authors seem blinded to its inner significance by the externals of current chaste living: 'To speak of Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal in one breath with contemporary priests and sisters dating is like comparing a Rembrandt with a comic strip'. Thomas Dubay: *What is religious life?* (New Jersey, 1979) p 55.

<sup>17</sup> See Christopher Kiesling: *Celibacy, prayer and friendship* (New York, 1978). This book is a fine realization of the emerging theology of celibacy.

<sup>18</sup> This is the thesis of Bellah et al.: *Habits of the heart* (Berkeley, 1985).

<sup>19</sup> Baum, Gregory: 'Catholic homosexuals', *Commonweal* vol 99, (1974) pp 479-81. It is worth noting that Baum seems to suggest that his or her sexuality lies at the heart of the homosexual's calling.

<sup>20</sup> Pieper, Josef: *The four cardinal virtues* (Notre Dame, 1966), p 161.

<sup>21</sup> Almost without exception, studies on homosexuality report that more men have the orientation and the experience than women have. This proportion seems plainly to obtain in religious life as well as in the general population.

<sup>22</sup> Whitehead, Evelyn Eaton and Whitehead, James D.: *Christian life patterns: the psychological challenges and religious invitations of adult life* (New York, 1979) p 104: 'Although this is a

rather private passage [out of confusion into admitted homosexuality], it is clear that it is best not negotiated alone. A fortunate person will find a friend, a minister, a counsellor to assist this interior passage. The stentorian silence of the Church as some of its members attempt this difficult passage does not exemplify how a community is to assist such critical transitions'.

<sup>23</sup> *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*: (Chicago, 1973-74) Macropaedia vol 16, s.v. Sexual Deviations, p 604, col 2. To the writer's discomfort, his opinion expresses a centuries-old canard, not a modern conclusion. Conceivably, those 'able to abstain from heterosexuality' may be the last cohort in existence not surveyed about their sex life.

<sup>24</sup> See William A. Barry, 'Jesuit formation today: an invitation to dialogue and involvement', *Studies in the spirituality of Jesuits* vol 20, no 5 (November, 1988), p 17.

<sup>25</sup> See the report of the Salvatorian Gay Ministry Task Force (Milwaukee, n.d., but around 1973). Cited in A. Kosnik, et al.: *Human sexuality*, pp 204-205.

<sup>26</sup> In the case of the middle-aged sister, her congregation decided to move her, and she very reluctantly acquiesced, thinking it a degrading punishment. After a number of years she has matured enough through therapy to drop it. She now considers the decision to move a good one, though she deeply resents 'the way it was made'. Her deep-seated resistance to even creative and compassionate authority seems to me not untypical of persons when they are going through a time of problem homosexuality. We have to keep in mind, however, that if Hannah Arendt and other philosophers are correct, we all have deep-seated problems with authority.

<sup>27</sup> This work does go on, forming one of the central tasks, for instance, of *Human sexuality*, the study published by the Catholic Theological Society of America in 1977. It is also the central task of Dennis Doherty, ed.: *Dimensions of human sexuality* (New York, 1979), a critical response to the study.

<sup>28</sup> How many religious today could readily concur with this statement: 'Taking a long, sensuous bath or shower is a form of auto-eroticism'? It is taken from a wise book with a foolish title, written to help married couples live exuberantly healthy and faithful lives. Paul Pearsall: *Super marital sex: loving for life* (New York, 1987), p 75.

<sup>29</sup> A steadily expressed opinion has it that homosexually active priests are more likely to have this 'pseudo-theology of sexuality' than other religious, a thought stunning in its implications.