

PART ONE

Section Three

On secular celibacy

§ 1

Unmarried life for healthy adult persons who are not constrained by pious vows protected by the Church, nor by lack of food to support a family, nor by the nature of their civil employment, cannot be a matter of indifference to a state in which there is still a lack of inhabitants; therefore, among almost all nations whose religious system permitted it, the taste for such a way of life is considered extremely deleterious, and bachelors are considered members who are obviously detrimental to the state.

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There follow examples of regulations issued by different nations against secular celibacy.

§ 4

The longer I view the unmarried state of laymen from this aspect, the more I find that its influence on the healthy state of the citizens is usually not judged with sufficient accuracy. What, indeed, can society expect of a class of people who, without being able to provide a sufficient reason for their chosen way of life, are of insouciant demeanor, and roam about in a continuous search of desired opportunities and, where they seize them, would like to provide themselves against possible future shortage?—It is known that a frequent change in love provides the body with certain strength enabling it to rush more quickly toward its exhaustion. This is so because new objects renew the stimulation which sucks out the last reserves of vital spirits and ends the debauchery early.—Moreover, it often happens that the desire to get rid of an unwanted stimulation does not occur opportunely, and under such circumstances a painstaking choice by the bachelor is not to be expected.—The spread of venereal poison among the street whores, who are then sought [by the foregoing], indicates vividly all the misfortune which springs from such disorder. But then, in an unfortunate hour, after having laid a thousand traps, the incontinent one gains the favor of a married woman and, regardless of any other consequences of the wicked intercourse, the infectious disease also spreads in an innocent family, a disease

which should really punish only the disturber of the general order in his guilty parts. What increases the misfortune so much is the following: the physician who is called in has to cure diseases in the most innocent children and in fathers who are free of any suspicion, and every effort is made to conceal their origin from him. Close questioning gives rise to suspicion which might destroy the well-being of the family in one fell stroke. This, because the guiltless husband believes that the physician, who expresses some doubts, despises his family, and he then seeks uncertain help. Or else he hits upon thoughts which, no matter how justified, are no less damaging to the family than the ill itself, yet without making its recognition as certain for the physician as would be required in the interest of curing it.—I speak from experience which many practical physicians share with me.

§ 5

How important is help against such ills

There are the physical reasons by which the disadvantage of the unmarried state among laymen who have no particular inclination to it must be judged, and the further development of which could rightly be expected of me here. In as much as this state has begun to become so general, for several years, I leave the investigation of the causes of our deteriorating morals to others. I have no doubt that even according to the reasons given, unmarried men who could maintain a family and who despite that evade the married state without reason, seem worthy of the same treatment which they would have meted out to them under the same circumstances in Rome.

But freedom? . . .

Well, this is a chimera if it is to be based on the detriment of all society.—I know: "According to the teaching of our Church, abstinence is better than the married state"; but one should beware and not waste this precious title on such a widespread class of people who use it only in order to mock the world and to give free play to the passions under a piously painted blanket under which virtue and posterity are suffocated.—But whoever nevertheless is of the opinion that the reintroduction of the law that promotes more marriage is against the Christian freedom should consider this: whether it would not be good, in the case of such freedom, as Süsmilch already advised, if an affluent bachelor contributed annually to a special fund from which the marriages of impecunious and diligent couples could be facilitated and supported, and that, according to the saying by a popular writer, "the bachelors would have strange children conferred on them, like a hen receives strange eggs for hatching."

According to Roman Law and customs introduced in Germany, it was fairly common for the estate of dead bachelors to go to the exchequer, and the so-called bachelor law is still in force in Brunswick, Württemberg, the Palatinate, and other lands.—Thus one can see that the state does not receive any compensation for the

loss it suffers; what is there to prevent a man, who during his lifetime in the midst of society enjoyed all the advantages of that society without helping to make good the loss which society suffers daily in citizens, unless he can prove his special vocation to the unmarried state by blameless behavior, [what is to prevent him] either to get married or at least to compensate the state by an appropriate contribution to the dowry and marriage fund; thereby he would enable others to provide the fruits of which he robbed the state by his stubbornness.

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There follow examples of such regulations.

§ 6

How such measures against bachelors should be taken

Whoever has ended his thirtieth year in a community, should be made to give an account of his way of life and his circumstances to a certain authority. It would help if every town and village compiled special tables of unmarried men and maidens, the former over twenty-five, the latter over twenty years old, listing name, age, health (whether they are blind, crippled, badly or well built), nutrition, skill.—The principals of police would annually compile these circumstances in order to make the bachelor pay a stipulated sum of money (unless he had to provide for old parents, or a widowed mother, small siblings, or he could plead a special vocation to unmarried life and prove his endeavor to fulfill this punctiliously), upon whose correct annual payment he would be free to continue his otherwise doubly disadvantageous way of life.

§ 7

However, the female sex, which is not free to enter into marriage at will, should receive in all earnestness as much assistance as possible. It is incomprehensible how little is done for this useful class of members of society. A large number of the healthiest and most fertile young women in almost every village are forced without any guilt on their part to languish at their worried parents' place, and to resist the advances of dangerous bachelors, without anybody giving it a thought how such parents could be relieved and how their daughters could be employed as useful mothers in the state. Yet, especially among the peasantry are the most maidens who are able to help the population and be useful in increasing it. Therefore, Süsmilch counted among the causes of lesser fertility in the country that the women there marry almost too late, often not before the thirtieth year and sometimes even later.—What a disadvantage must it be, therefore, in every small village if so many maidens die unmarried, since it is certain that only lack of help and of a small contribution prevented them from becoming worthy mothers!

Poor unmarried women, especially young fecund widows, to whom even the Apostles (partly overlooked by today's apostles) recommended remarriage for several reasons, and altogether maidens of healthy and promising body, if well-behaved, would receive certain sums from the dowry fund, and affluent young men, who would take them in marriage, would receive certain advantages, such as relief from taxes for several years, etc. The taxes imposed on bachelors would have to be in proportion to their affluence, so that effective contributions for poor married couples could be raised. Therefore it would be especially meritorious toward mankind if their legacies in regions where bachelor law is still in force anyway, would be diverted by magnanimous regents, to the aforementioned dowry fund, instead of to the exchequer, so that at least from the ashes of bachelors, children would be produced of whom he robbed his country in his lifetime.

§8

Bachelors should be punished more strictly for incontinence

In case a bachelor forgot himself and deflowered a maiden, he should be punished incomparably more harshly than a young man of less than twenty-five years of age, and he should be made to pay a special contribution to the marriage fund, unless he decided to marry the deflowered maiden, or, where this is not feasible, another woman.

To deprive unmarried life even more of its attractions (unless it be bound up with an eminently virtuous life), and to weaken the taste for debauchery more and more, in case of equal deserts, the married man should be given preference before all others, and also younger men should receive a flattering distinction before others of their rank who are neither married nor have produced children if married.—Thus in most imperial cities only married citizens are eligible for posts at the magistrate, and in deeds set by Mühlhausen to the law faculty of Helmstadt, the following is said of such applicants: "because married men are entitled to this, and the unmarried ones are not half-masters but only quarter-masters." Likewise in Switzerland, bachelors are excluded variously from public positions, and it seems natural, especially in free republics, that such posts also are entrusted least to those who do not want to tie themselves to the country by any closer bond, or are by their reproachable manners inappropriate to such a special virtue.

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