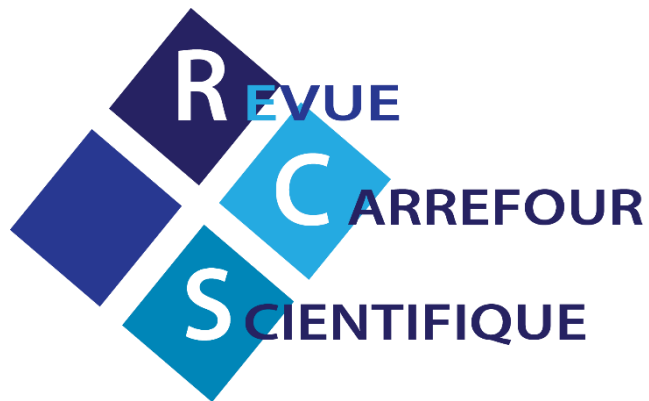




REVUE CARREFOUR SCIENTIFIQUE

N° 03, Volume 01, octobre 2024



Revue interdisciplinaire
de Philosophie, Littérature, Arts et Sciences sociales

Site internet : <https://revuecarrefourscientifique.net>

ISSN : 2958-8855

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REVUE CARREFOUR SCIENTIFIQUE

Revue interdisciplinaire
de Philosophie, Littérature, Arts et Sciences sociales

Semestrielle
N° 03, Volume 01, octobre 2024

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LIGNE ÉDITORIALE

La philosophie est pensée agonistique. Comme telle, elle est un espace de dialogue critique et d'échange pluridisciplinaire. La pensée philosophique rencontre ainsi tous les champs du savoir avec lesquels elle entretient un commerce permanent. C'est ce qui fait de la philosophie un carrefour interdisciplinaire, un point d'ancrage et de passage de la pensée. Matrice génésique de toutes les sciences qu'elle a enfantées, la philosophie n'a jamais rompu le lien ombilical avec les autres régionalités scientifiques qui sont ses descendants disciplinaires.

Dès lors, on peut dire que la pensée philosophique est un foyer de rencontre et de séparation, de convergence et de divergence, de construction et de déconstruction. Derrière cette idée de rencontre et de séparation, se profile celle d'un espace de bifurcation ou de trifurcation où des régionalités scientifiques, des figures épistémiques et des personnages conceptuels viennent clarifier, renforcer ou mettre en crise les sources de leur enracinement métaphysique, payer leur dette épistémologique et accomplir leur relative autonomie disciplinaire. Pour tout dire, la philosophie est un carrefour épistémique et cognitif. Mais, si elle est carrefour, c'est-à-dire lieu où plusieurs cheminements théoriques et méthodologiques se croisent et se traversent, tout support qui prétend vulgariser sa cause ne doit-il pas, au nom du principe de la congruence des formes, épouser sa caractéristique ramificatoire ? Pour dire les choses de manière beaucoup plus précise, si la philosophie est carrefour, ses supports de vulgarisation ne doivent-ils pas être des espaces fusionnels, confusionnels et interactifs prompts à éclairer et à démêler les fils enchevêtrés de la réalité par la production de pensées rigoureuses et fermes ? Dans ces conditions, peut-il y avoir meilleur nom de baptême pour une revue d'un Département de philosophie que celui de Carrefour ? Pour bien se démarquer, ce Carrefour peut-il avoir meilleure caractéristique que celle de refléter la substance et la matière scientifiques ? Apparemment non ! C'est donc bien à propos que le Département de Philosophie de l'Université Peleforo Gon Coulibaly a choisi de baptiser sa plateforme de publication et de vulgarisation académique et épistémique du nom éponyme de *Revue Carrefour Scientifique*.

Revue Carrefour Scientifique, reprenant la charge métaphorique du carrefour, se positionne, dans l'univers des plateformes de vulgarisation scientifique, comme un nœud intersectionnel entre plusieurs voies se coupant, se découpant, se recoupant de manière symboliquement idéale aux fins de révéler les mal-entendus, dénouer les équivoques, traquer les incertitudes et les manquements ou réajuster les acquis, les enjeux et les perspectives à travers un cheminement heuristique pertinent et un questionnement érudit, fécond et prospectif.

Revue Carrefour Scientifique est donc un lieu d'incubation et de maturation des savoirs, où viennent se ressourcer des horizons du discours scientifique ; et, plus qu'un simple lieu de ressourcement, elle est un espace de déplacement, de remplacement et de renversement paradigmatique de la pensée à travers un questionnement informé, critique et rigoureux mêlé de créativité et d'inventivité théoriques. Elle est, au total, un instrument de la transformation du savoir, de la métamorphose conceptuelle, un outil méthodologique et épistémologique de vulgarisation scientifique et académique qui offre aux chercheurs et aux enseignants de multiples disciplines une assise rigoureuse et pertinente pour leurs travaux, à travers un renouvellement critique des méthodes, des théories, des résultats et des paradigmes.

Revue Carrefour Scientifique, revue en ligne, priorise les productions scientifiques de qualité pour faire éclore de nouvelles formes d'intelligibilités arrimées à des sources et ressources théoriques, doctrinales et conceptuelles issues du creuset de recherches novatrices et critiques. C'est pourquoi elle encourage le dialogue des modernités anciennes, présentes et à-venir à travers des articles originaux, des comptes-rendus et des publications de vulgarisation.

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CHILD PROTECTION FROM ADULT SEXUAL ABUSE THROUGH THE REPRESSION OF SODOMY IN EUROPEAN MIDDLE AGES

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Résumé

La protection des enfants contre les abus sexuels causés par les adultes et, dans certains cas, par eux-mêmes n'est pas une prérogative de l'ère postmoderne. Bien que le concept soit d'actualité, l'objectif de cet article est de souligner que certaines prédispositions et lois adoptées par les autorités publiques et religieuses au Moyen Âge concernant le contrôle et la réglementation du comportement sexuel impliquent une protection contre les abus sexuels et la corruption des « mineurs ». L'examen des textes législatifs publics et religieux, des enquêtes et des décisions de justice, ainsi que des écrits des théologiens a révélé que la lutte contre la fornication et la sodomie, qui lie fréquemment adultes et enfants, permet non seulement de punir les coupables, mais aussi de protéger les enfants contre les abus sexuels dus aux adultes.

Mots-clés : Abus sexuels - Fornication - Mineurs - Protection juvénile - Sodomie.

Abstract

Protecting children from sexual abuse caused by adults and, in some cases, from them is not a prerogative of the postmodern era. Though the concept is timely, the aim of this paper is to point out that some predispositions and laws passed by public and religious authorities in the Middle Ages concerning the control and regulation of sexual behavior imply protection from sexual abuse and corruption of "children". The examination of public and religious legislative texts, inquiries and court decisions, as well as writings by theologians revealed that the fight against fornication and sodomy, which frequently binds adults and children, enables not only the punishment of any culprits, but also the protection of children from sexual abuse due to adults.

Keywords: Child protection - Fornication - Children - Sexual abuses - Sodomy.

Introduction

The issue of protecting minors from sexual abuse¹² and generally from all forms of abuse is a major worldwide concern¹³. As early as 1924, measures to fight child labour and all kinds of abuses they could suffer from adults were enacted in the Geneva Convention¹⁴. These measures were reiterated in 1959, and then extended by the UN and its specialized agencies in 1989 to almost all States. In the sexual field, concrete measures in Europe and the United States have been taken to punish by imprisonment and fines any adult found guilty of child sexual abuse¹⁵. By the term child, this study means “any human being under the age of eighteen years, unless majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to him”¹⁶. This could suggest that the issue of protecting children from sexual abuse is the prerogative of our post-modern era, while already in the Middle Ages, structures such as the Church, Monasteries as well as certain public authorities produced regulations which, if carefully analysed, would show that this question is not entirely new.

Indeed, by examining certain medieval texts, including poems, inquisitorial accounts, normative texts, which deal with sodomy, one realizes that this practice frequently concerns children and adults¹⁷. Certainly, that sexual orientation was practiced

¹² Child sexual abuse refers to any sexual act between an adult and a child, or between two children, where one older child exerts physical and/or psychological pressure on the other, younger child. The sexual act in this case is obtained either by force, coercion or persuasion. Non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and sexual communication by telephone or Internet are also considered as sexual abuse. Alternative terms such as "sexual violence"; "sexual assault" on children is also used to refer to this phenomenon. (WHO; 1999).

¹³ Studies by David Finkelhor, Director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, show that, worldwide 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse (David FINKELHOR; and *al*, 2014, p 329). Available at: <https://openworks.wooster.edu/blackandgold/vol1/iss1/2..>). Cases of sexual abuse are legion today. Some are even of a public nature such as the case of paedophile clerics. In Germany, in 2018, the Catholic Church apologized after the publication of a damning report alleging sexual assaults by clergy on more than 3,600 children, the majority of whom were boys under the age of 13. cf. <http://www.rfi.fr/europe/20180925-alle-magne-rapport-eglise-abus-sexuels-mineurs-excuses>.

¹⁴ The industrial revolution occurred first in the United Kingdom and France in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. As many factories, mines or building sites hired workers in masse, they, often with many children and little income, encouraged their children to join them in the factory where they performed menial tasks under the same poor conditions as them.

¹⁵ In most European countries and in the United States, any act of penetration of a child is an offense if he has not reached a certain age below which there is a presumption of lack of consent. The age limit is 14 in Germany, Austria and Belgium, 15 in Denmark and France, and 16 in England, Wales and Switzerland. Except in the United States, where the judge may decide to impose only a fine, this type of violence is always punished by a custodial sentence. The length of the sentence varies from one country to another. See <https://www.senat.fr/lc/lc21/lc210.html>.

¹⁶ Derived from the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, see <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

¹⁷ In the Middle Ages, according to canonical rules, the age of majority was reached at 14 for men and 12 for women. However, at this age, the majority of these young people remain vulnerable, physically and

by the latter, as it involved two adults, but sodomy that involved adults and children was frequently denounced and therefore, recorded in history sources. Religious and public authorities accused those adults of corrupting the youth. Previous scholars worked on the issue of sodomy as a topic of inquiry. For instance, the works conducted by Guido Ruggiero and Rocke Mickael described cases of sodomy and the sodomites respectively in Venice and Florence. The two scholars argued that Sodomy in these cities implies adults, playing active role and the young who held a passive role. The former are said to have corrupted the latter (Guido RUGGIERO, 1989, 223p ; Michael ROCKE, 2010, 371p). More recently Dyan Elliott published a book that deals with the same topic. For him, religious authorities through the Middle Ages and even later, did not act enough in order to prevent the clerical sin, that is, sodomy over boys in both secular and regular clergy.

Hence, the general objective of this study is to prove that the medieval authorities care of protecting children from sexual abuse even if the reasons are different from today's. Indeed, while these religious authorities focused on the sinfulness of same-sex relations, they could avoid scandal rather than the exploitation of youth. Sanctions against same-sex relations were not instituted by Christian leaders as measures to protect children. Instead, they aimed to emphasize their innate corruptibility over their innocence (Dyan ELLIOTT, 2020, p. 37). Holding this position was objective, but what must be stressed in this study is that, even if, these repressive measures did not target the protection of the youth from sexual abuse caused by adults, calling for the end of any kinds of illicit sexual behaviours such as sodomy, implicitly and theoretically solved the issue of child sexual abuse. It was quite the same situation in Italian cities at the end of Middle Ages, when regulations instituted by public institutions were not initially oriented toward the protection of the youth viewed as vulnerable category. Such regulations were taken for social and religious reasons. They were also issued by the public authorities to fight against and repress acts of sodomy. They represented implicit ways to protecting children from sexual abuse caused by adults.

especially economically dependent. They are also psychologically fragile. This makes their decision making and their consent almost null. To this effect, they are subject to several types of pressure and violence from adults or older young. It is essentially on this basis that we qualify them as "children" with an age limit of 18 years as in most European countries today. Also, most documented cases of sodomy involve youths ranging in age from 13 to 20 and adults from 19 to 50. (Michael ROCKE, p245).

Thus, this investigation essentially draws on public and religious legislative texts, inquiries and court decisions, as well as writings by theologians whose opinions are extremely important to grasp the medieval world¹⁸. The method of analysis consisted mainly of examining and comparing literary and normative sources. In concrete terms, this involved examining court rulings against cases of sodomy, mainly in the Italian cities of Venice and Florence, and comparing them with sermons on the same subject in order to assess the seriousness of the problem. As for the monasteries, it was the codes of conduct relating to these establishments and the letters produced between monks that were examined. We searched for evidence of measures prohibiting homosexual practices between adults and oblates, to show that the protection of minors was a constant concern.

The study concentrates on the examination of these data. The focus of the essay is to scrutinize how public and ecclesiastical authorities, through regulations taken against fornication in general and sodomy in particular, made possible the protection of children from sexual abuses due to adults. The answer to this question is centered on two fundamental arguments. The first shows that through the laws passed against fornication in general and sodomy in particular, the ecclesiastical authorities regulate the question of protection of children from sexual abuse both among themselves and between them and adults. The second argument emphasizes the measures taken by the public authorities to achieve objectives similar to the previous ones. It is also important to note that this study is focuses on boys only.

1. The Clergy, Fornication and Child Protection

1.1. Forbidding Fornication

¹⁸ Concerning the religious and public regulatory texts, we are particularly interested in the monastic rule enacted by Saint Benedict for his religious order (the Benedictines), the penitentials (a booklet written for the clergy to guide them in the administration of the sacrament of penance), the decree of Gratian (its purpose was not only to gather canonical rules but also to conciliate them, thus making them more coherent). For the second type of text, it is the investigations and decisions issued by the Council of Ten (Florence) and the Office of the Night (Venice) that are essentially used. Both structures were set up to fight against social practices considered reprehensible such as sodomy. The Office of the Night in particular was founded to tackle the “*unspeakable crime*”. It was set up in 1432. Its mode of action is to carry out investigations when an often-anonymous informant files a complaint against an alleged sodomite or in the absence of any initial filing. It is also responsible for imposing fines on the guilty. The Council of Ten (1348) in Venice acted in a similar way. Only, it has a much more religious character, in view of the penalties imposed on culpable, compared to the office of the Night. (Nicolaus, HAJEK: « Still a Rivalry: Contrasting Renaissance Sodomy Legislation in Florence and Venice », in: *Black & Gold*: Vol. 1, 2015, pp 1-15). Finally, the opinions of St. Augustine (354-430), Theodore the Studite (759-826), and especially Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444) are of considerable contribution in elaboration of this study.

Cases of child sexual abuse in the Middle Ages were not unfamiliar. But, only a few have been reported¹⁹. The reason which is quite logical, is that the victims, in the young age, were reluctant to denounce these acts. In order to avoid any dishonour, parents also recommended silence. However, it could not be affirm that the cases recorded had actually occurred. They could be defamatory accusations (Nicolaus HAJEK, 2015, p. 4). Nevertheless, the frequent measures taken by religious and public authorities to combat these practices indicate that these abuses were recurrent. It must be noted that no medieval notion refers directly to the “protection of sexual abuse of the child”, and certainly no reference to the terms existed in the juridical sense. Still, among all the rules established the Church concerning Christians’ sexual behaviours and desires, the one about fornication deserves special attention. Indeed, by making fornication a sexual sin to be avoided, the Church addressed various sexual practices that are illicit in present days.

Fornication is the sin of perpetrating sexual acts, of any kind, outside of marriage, marriage being the legitimate union par excellence. Forbidding fornication has a biblical basis. For instance, in his letters Saint Paul constantly refer to it. In the one addressed to the Hebrews, he warns that "*fornicatores enim, et adulteros judicabit Deus*" (Heb 13, 4). In the apostle’s epistolary message to the Corinthians, the idea is that the Kingdom of God shall be denied to fornicators. Moreover, St Paul insistently recommends marriage among Christians in order to avoid fornication (1 Cor.6:9; Eph.5:5). Subsequent to these condemnations, St. Jerome, St. Augustine and the entire Church Fathers continue in this same perspective. St Augustine thus points out for his part that at the moment when, the

¹⁹ One of the most gruesome cases concerns the accusations made against Gilles de Rais, Marshal of France and comrade in arms of Joan of Arc. His confessions show that his actions are sadistic and worthy of a Hollywood "serial killer". According to him: « *On my own, without the advice of anyone, I conceived the idea of doing this for the sole pleasure of my senses. In fact, I felt an incomparable pleasure. These crimes I perpetrated according to my imagination and my thought, (...) and my carnal delight... I emitted the spermatic seed in the most sinful way on the belly of these children, as much before as after their death, and also during their death (...) when they languished, I committed with them the sodomite vice in the way I described. When these children were dead, I kissed them, and those who had beautiful heads and limbs, I gave them to contemplate (...)* ». The conditions under which this information was obtained leave a lot to be desired. Nevertheless, it allows us to highlight the fact that the frequently denounced sodomy brings together adults and children (Didier GODARD, 2003, p172). This situation was so worrying in the Middle Ages that many lords on their deathbed confessed to having committed rapes of young girls. This is the case of this 14th century Gascon lord who left in his will "*one hundred pounds to marry the girls he took their virginity if they were ever found*". Or the final confessions of those condemned to death for another crime, who at the foot of the gallows publicly confessed the rape of young girls (Mireille VINCENT-CASSY, 2001, p120).

spirit gives itself up to fornication, it cannot occupy itself with anything else. Man is then deprived of the principle which humanizes him. He is “so absorbed in what he does, that one cannot say that his thought is his own; on the contrary, one could say that he is only flesh”²⁰.

From the sixth century onwards, the first penitentials laid particular emphasis on the need for Christian to avoid fornication. The term “fornication” became generalized and applied to a certain number of illicit sexual acts such as incest, adultery, sodomy, masturbation, apart from simple fornication defined by Gratian “*as illiciti coitus, qui fit extra uxorem legitimam*”²¹. The penitential of Finnian, proposes a sentence of six years on bread and water for the fornicating nun and seven years for the religious (Cyrille VOGUEL, 2007, p. 56). For Saint Columban, fornication must be sanctioned by the marriage of the sinners with the agreement of the family of the young girl, preceded by a fast of one year, while that of Theodore suggests that if someone commits fornication, they will have to do penance for one year (Cyrille VOGUEL, 2007, p. 60, 69). These measures principally concern heterosexual intercourses. The eleventh century penitential of Burchard of Worms defines sodomy as fornication. Therefore, his penitential condemns religious and lay persons guilty of this vice to different degrees:

Episcopus fornicationem faciens naturalem XII annos poeniteat, presbyter X, diaconus IX, subdiaconus octo, clericus septem, laicus sex annis poeniteat. Frater carnalis cum fratre carnali fornicationem faciens XV annis ab omni carne se absteineat²².

In the *Summa Confessorum*, the priest used to inquire about fornication in the following manner. First, he asked about the age at which the penitent had fornicated for the first time. Next, he noted the number of women with whom he committed the sin. Most important, the priest asked the penitent about the number of women he had corrupted. When eventually guilty, the penitent were punished.

In Robert Grosseteste’s manual (13th century), for example, fornication was punished with imposing three years of fasting²³. The Church forbade all forms of sexual relations outside of marriage, with a view of preventing in this way children from abuses.

²⁰ Saint Augustine, *sermons*, 161,162. In *Essential sermons of Saint Augustine* (2007), pub. New City Press, 444p.

²¹ Gratian, *Decretum*, C.36 q.1 d.p.c.2§1.

²² BUCHARD DE WORMS : *Decretum*, “De Sodomitico peccato”, 17a, CAP. 56, *Patrologia Latina*, (140 0931D. Besides, it is known from him that : “if a layman has intercourse with laywoman, that is both, without any bond of marriage, they will do penance for three years”. BUCHARD DE WORMS : *Decretum*, PL 140. 537-1058, questions 1-194, in: Schmitz 2, pp 29-68. See Pierre PAYER, 2009, p108.

²³ GROSSETESTE: *De modo confitendi* 2.6, ed. Goering and Mantello, 93.

Today, when it is sometimes hard for courts and parents to prove, face and regulate efficiently child on child sexual abuse²⁴, banning fornication could be an advantageous measure to regulate their excesses. It must be noted that these measures are likely general in nature to suggest that the church was concerned with the protection of the child. Therefore, it would be appropriate to look specifically at the measures taken against one aspect of fornication, namely sodomy, especially in monasteries.

1.2. Forbidding Sodomy in Monasteries

In monasteries, as surprising as it may appear, a lot of rules were established with the specific aim of avoiding sexual relations between boys but also between adults and the latter. The fact is that, in these places, the most exposed were undoubtedly the youngest. The latter were known as "oblates", from the past participle of the Latin verb *offero* (to offer, to consecrate)²⁵. In order to protect them, first against themselves and then against adults, prevention was necessary. This is what the rule of Saint Benedict in chapter XXII is all about.²⁶ The rule stipulates :

1-Singuli per singula lecta dormiant. 3- Si potest fieri omnes in uno loco dormiant; sin autem multitudo non sinit, deni aut viceni cum senioribus qui super eos solliciti sint pausent. 4-Candela iugiter in eadem cella ardeat usque mane. 7- Adulescentiores fratres iuxta se non habeant lectos, sed permixti cum senioribus²⁷

For Benedict, when monks slept in the same dormitory, they could be on time at the night service, and individual absences caused by negligence was quite impossible. In addition, it was an evidence of great morality. The objective of sleeping together was to avoid fornication, in general, and particularly sodomy among these oblates and between adults and the young. The individual bed is definitely a luxury for these people who vow poverty. But to avoid any kind of physical contact with sexual desire, the drafters of the

²⁴ Child on Child Sexual Abuse | WKLaw (wksexcrimes.com)

²⁵ These young children were offered to the monasteries as gifts. Some fathers offered these children either to expiate their sin, or because of a congenital malformation etc. These young were entrusted for life and were thus obliged to be monks, according to the rule of St. Benedict. (Nora BEREND, 1994, pp 123-136).

²⁶ The Rule of Saint Benedict (Latin: *Regula Sancti Benedicti*) is a book of precepts written in 516 by Benedict of Nursia (c. AD 480–550) for monks living communally under the authority of an abbot. The Rule of Saint Benedict has been used by Benedictines for 15 centuries, and thus St. Benedict is sometimes regarded as the founder of Western monasticism due to reform that his rules had on the current Catholic hierarchy.

²⁷ "1 Let them sleep singly in separate beds. 3. If it can be done, let all sleep in one room: but if their number does not allow of this, let them repose by tens or by twenties with their seniors who have charge of them. 4 Let a candle burn continually in the dormitory until morning. 7. Let not the younger brethren have their beds by themselves, but among those of the seniors". *Regula Sancti Benedicti*, Chapitre XXII.

rule recommended such type individuality. Installing partitions between old monks' beds and those of the young people avoided the latter from indulging in indecent sexual practices, and it allowed the elder to keep an eye on each other.

These measures do not appear in St. Augustine's rule, but we can assume that for Benedict it is obvious that in the *dormitorium*, young and adult monks exerted sexual pressure on oblates. Furthermore, these rules of supervision have survived in the statutes of the monasteries which have adopted and adapted the rule of Saint Benedict. This is the case of Cluny. Bernard of Cluny writings between 1060 and 1090, assigned four masters to the dormitory, each bearing a stick and a lantern, to preside over elaborate arrangements for sleeping and for night time visits to the lavatory. The stick ensured that the masters never touched the boys with their hands. If a boy was sleeping uncovered, he was poked with a stick and told through sign language to cover himself up. Also, if a boy had to go out at night to relieve himself, he must be accompanied by a master "of good character and mature age" and another boy with a lantern; the boys must never touch each other and any monk is forbidden to have any physical contact with them, even to touch their clothes.²⁸

In comparison, in the abbey of Fontevraud, the dormitory was to be guarded by one nun converse during the day, by two and by four at night, by one before the nocturnes and by another until daylight, with a candle always lit. Sodomy (also applied in the Middle Ages to sexual relations between women) and by extension the influence exerted on the youngest were quite feared. To addition, it is possible to cite the example of Theodore the Studite, a great figure of Byzantine monasticism in the 9th century. The latter recommends and forbids, in a letter, addressed to his protégé Nicholas, newly abbot, to take a young person, alone in his cell: "Do not take as a pupil in your cell a young person of whom you have envy, but use the services of someone above all suspicion, and of various brethren" (THEODORE STUDITE, 1905, p. 71-74). This call implies that sexual relations between an adult influential by his position and social rank (in our case an abbot) and a vulnerable young person in monasteries is by no means an imagination. Moreover, the care that Theodore the Studite takes to go back on this recommendation indicates that there is, at

²⁸ BERNARD OF CLUNY (the elder): *Ordo Cluniacensis*, Ed. M. Herrgott. In: *Vetus disciplina monastica*, Paris, 1726. Reprint, Sieburg, 1999, pp 133–364. Some abbots like Odo of Cluny, Peter Damian in eleventh centuries did not miss to criticize the behavior of these monks who turns sexually to boys. (Dyan ELLIOTT, p. 63-66).

least on his part, a desire to prevent and fight against these sodomite practices and implicitly against child sexual abuses.

In the same vein, Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury and formerly monk at Bec adopts measures to prevent this type of acts. In the eleventh century, Lanfranc's *constitutions* indicate that young recruits be governed by a discreet, middle-aged monk, who was to watch over them as they went to bed and to be present if any other monk wished to address them, or smile to them. This process was intended to minimize the opportunity for monks guilty of past indiscretions to engage in further unnatural sexual abuse of the younger ones (LANFRANC, 2002, p. 170-173). Dyan Elliott analyses these cases as isolated measures taken against the sin "not fit to be named" but which are absolutely not directed in favour or for the protection of children (2020, p. 69). Moreover, some authors and normative texts hold them responsible, just like women whom are seen as the devil tempting honest and pious men (Lynda COON, 2010, p. 81, 120)²⁹. Also, the private penances proper to the members of the clergy encourage the multiplication of the cases of sodomy and make these religious authorities accomplices to the great displeasure of the public authorities³⁰. However, mainly in the monasteries, if these measures are respected, this implicitly solves the problem of sexual abuse of boys.

Therefore, the argument is that, through a kind of "invisible hand", these measures aimed at curbing sodomy in monasteries theoretically and implicitly contribute to protecting children from sexual abuse: isolating children, preventing contact with old monks, avoiding sodomy, is also protecting children. In addition, it is not to be excluded the hypothesis that the decision of monasteries (mainly Citeaux) from the 12th century onwards not to recruit oblates but a novice who has completed his fifteenth year before entering the order³¹, could have been prompted by the inability to prevent certain sexual abuses of young people among themselves or of adult monks on young oblates or also to

²⁹Several regulations and authors sanction children involved in sodomite relationships where they play a passive role. For Instance, Peter the Venerable take boys responsible for monks' sin in case of sodomy on them. He presents them as sources of temptation as women. "The morals of the young are not corrupted in the cloister often the older brothers are molested by them. Anyone who defends the young and does not reprove them is frequently duped and falls into a trap." (Dyan ELLIOTT, 2020, p. 152-153). Also, the penitential of Cummean (c.650) mentions that, "a small boy misused by an older one, if he is ten years of age, shall fast for a week; if he consented, for twenty days". *Cummean*, c. 9, in: Ludwig BIELER, 1963, pp 128-129.

³⁰ There are some exceptions namely in Normandy and in Iberia as showed by Dyan ELLIOTT, 2020, p 55.

³¹ In 1157, the age was raised to eighteen. *Statuts Ordonnance Cisterciens*, ann. 1157, c. 23, 1:62; ann. 1181, c. 9, 1:89.

avoid corrupting the "spirit" of the monks who were "ecstatic" at the sight of the young oblates. That is no doubt a form of protection by prevention.³²

Even if these facts did not guarantee the eradication of all sexual relations in the monasteries, we can already draw from these measures a will of Benedict and of all those who adopted his rule throughout the medieval period to avoid, by prevention, sexual relations between young people and between young people and adults. These are clear examples of measures aimed even implicitly at protecting children from sexual abuse by adults.

To sum up, all these sexual restrictions that have as their central term the sin of fornication show us, through the texts highlighted here, the concern of the Church about sexual relations between young people and especially those between adults and young adolescents.

2. Public Authorities against Sodomy and Child Sexual Corruption

2.1 Medieval Model of Children Sodomized by Adults

The thesis of a concern of the public authorities in the Middle Ages about the sexual abuse of the young, revolves in this study, mainly around the statistical data collected and highlighted by Rocke Michael and Guido Ruggiero in their study on homosexuality respectively in Florence and Venice during the fifteenth century. The results of their analysis of sodomite relations reveal that they occur between young partners whose age is between 6 and 26 years, and adults (19-60 years)³³. The former plays the passive role and the latter the active role. Sexual pressure and/or abuse is instinctively exerted by these adults on these young persons.³⁴

Sexual abuse was not only directed towards adolescents. Ruggiero points out that maids influenced by masters were sodomized because it was necessary to avoid unwanted pregnancies at all costs (Guido RUGGIERO, 1989, p. 120). These data provide two important information though. Firstly, anal sex was almost absent between adults and rarely between adolescents. Secondly, and more visibly, there is a pronounced, almost

³² *Statuts Ordonnance Cisterciens*, ann. 1154, c. 16, 1: 57. Also Charles, MIRAMON, 1999, pp 825-849.

³³ According to the surveys conducted by the Office of the Night (1478-1502), there is a concentration of passives in 15 to 17 age group (54%). Among adults, the percentages of active partners is 71 for ages between 19-40 (Michael ROCKE, 2010, pp 243, 245).

³⁴ Ruggiero thus notes that the passive partner, frequently referred to as a boy (*puer*), an adolescent (*adolescens*), or an individual under legal age (Guido, RUGGIERO, 1989, p. 121).

exclusive attraction of adults to adolescents. This attraction for adolescents can already be found in the Greco-Roman world. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey have shown that what counts in these civilizations is social status (Mark, GOLDEN and Peter, TOOHEY, 2003, 352p). As such, to be taken by one's fellow man, one's peer, is dishonourable, especially because by doing so, one was feminizing oneself. This was probably the case with the Hebrews. Bible mentions: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination", *Cum masculo non commiscearis coitu femineo, quia abominatio est* (Lev 18:22). Therefore, and to return to the Greco-Roman society, one could turn for his sexual desires of same sex to the persons of inferior rank either a slave or a young adolescent. Even if, in Rome, it was punishable to abuse a young teenager citizen, noble for preference (Géraldine PUCCINI-DELBEY, 2010, p. 141-167).

In Italian cities at the end of the Middle Ages, masters with power and material comfort had sex with young adolescents (slavery having been officially forbidden by the Church) who were often in search of personal fulfilment. They are often apprentices, students, etc.³⁵. Furthermore, the period between 14 and 20 years, is the age of physical beauty and sexual voluptuousness mixed with a touch of naivety. In regard to this, Philippe de Novare notes that: "Nature smokes in childhood and lights in youth and the flame rises then very high" (Pierre RICHE; Danièle ALEXANDRE-BIDON, 1994, p202). In addition to the physical attraction, sexual intercourse with adolescents, especially the youngest ones, reduced the risk of denunciation because it was easier to threaten them or persuade them with numerous gifts (some parents took advantage of this). This is illustrated by the case of young Biliotti. He accused Luigi Pitti and then retracted his complaint, because (under the advice of his older brother), the Pitti family, was not to be taken as enemies for fear of reprisals. Elsewhere, the case of a doctor who deflowered and injured the anus of a young teenager (his patient) is reported; which doctor got away with it after having given 2 florins to the boy's brother in-law who wanted to denounce him. Eventually, it is worthy to note the case of Domenico di Zanobi Biliotti, a sixteen years old teenager who works for Francesco di Benedetto, a member of an

³⁵ In Venice, Ruggiero highlights a case of sodomy involving a young Saracen of thirteen years and his master Benedicto. In investigation, the teenage had to mention that: "their relationship was one of friendship based on Benedicto *teaching him like a master*". Guido RUGGIERO, 1989, p116. Table B.12, page 249 of Michael ROCKE gives us statistics by profession of the people involved in sodomy. Textile traders come first 619, clergy 94, etc.

eminent Florentine family. In 1431, this boy charged his employer with the crime of sodomy. In response, di Benedetto fired him. But when the court seized this case to investigate, the suspect promised to the teenager through his big brother to reengage him and give him all that he asked to compensate his abuse. As a result, the boy, under the advice of his big brother withdrew his complaint. In this sense, Rocke Michael underlines that the testimony of these boys and adolescents, perhaps easily intimidated because of their young age was not always dependable. Other boys tried to protect their partners, sometimes because they had been bribed or intimated (Michael ROCKE, p. 71). These facts justify the interest and sexual attraction of adults for the young.

2.2. Reasons for Keeping Children from Adults' Sexual Abuse

The structures set up to regulate deviant social phenomena were established for several reasons which all gravitate around the idea of sexual and abusive corruption of young people by adults³⁶. Indeed, Europe in the fourteenth century faces a health crisis known as the plague, which decimates much of its population. In Italian cities, this demographic fall is interpreted (as everywhere in Europe) as a matter of divine anger because of sins of men in particular the sins of sexual order. Sodomy is mainly indexed³⁷. Also, even with the decline of the plague in the following century, certain theologians do not hesitate to maintain the link between the fall of the population in certain Italian cities and sodomy (Nicolaus HAJEK, 2015, p. 7)³⁸. This time, it is no longer a question of plague, but they hold that the practice of these homosexual acts has a bond with the weak demographic of these cities since they move away young people from marriage and heterosexual relations in general. Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444) is one of these theologians³⁹. On this subject, he stands concerning Venice, that: "You do not understand that it is the reason for which (the Sodomy) you lost half of your population during the last twenty-five years". Then adds about Tuscany that it is: "the country with the fewest

³⁶ In fact, for these organizations, the young teenager is called upon, once he is an adult, to exercise civic responsibilities on which the smooth running and prosperity of the city depend. As such, he must absolutely not be soiled and deprived of all his virtue, at the risk of compromising his future. But it is those to which sodomy leads (Nicolaus HAJEK, 2015, p 10).

³⁷ Laymen and clerics men have obviously provided several causes to this catastrophe. They, as example, accused Jews to poisoning food, wells and streams. Tortured into confessions, rounded up in city squares or in their synagogues, they have been, then exterminated in masse (Samuel COHN, 2007, p 4).

³⁸ The pattern is this causal sequence: sodomy (and Jews) = population fall.

³⁹ He was a Franciscan missionary particularly known for his virulent sermons on various social issues such as witchcraft, infanticide, Jews, gambling and sodomy.

inhabitants in world, only because of this vice” (Michael, ROCKE, 2010, p. 36-37). About the relationship between sodomy and demography, the author, like other theologians before him, takes up the biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose version according to which God destroys these cities because of the practice of homosexual acts is retained.

Moreover, he held that the sodomy suffered by adolescents distracted them from marriage, the common ideal. And, the responsibility fell more on those adults who were their partners and even showed the bad example, starting with those parents who favoured prostitution of their boys for material goods or for obtaining a job: "some parents allow their sons to do all the shameful, bad and sinful things possible (...) and the reason why they allow it is to obtain civic offices or money" (Michael ROCKE, 2010, p. 39). Thus, we realize that sexual and moral corruption of adults on young adolescents was quite evident. This sexual corruption of the young is one of the reasons that lead these public authorities to take measures aimed at their protection.

2.3 Actions against Sodomy and Child Protection

Several actions have been undertaken by the public authorities in Florence or Venice to extirpate the sexual abuse of young people through the repression of sodomy. Therefore, as late marriage was one of the causes that pushes young people to perpetrate these acts, they decided to ease access to marriage for young people who often did not have enough financial resources to marry a woman. It was believed that the longer it took for men to marry, the more they were attracted to these acts by adults during their youth. Also, the high amount of dowry led to births without marriage, which had the effect of letting children grow up without a father figure present (strict education). And as a result, the children became quite feminine. Having grown up in a female environment, this inclines them later to sodomy (Leah L., 2009, p. 19-21; A. Lilah F, 2017, p. 2). In addition to this action to encourage marriages, there was also an institutionalization of prostitution in order to fight "evil with evil" (A. Lilah, 2017, p. 1). The objective indeed, is to promote heterosexual over homosexual relations. If access to honest women was only possible

through marriage, it was necessary to make prostitutes accessible to prevent young people and even adults from turning to sodomy.⁴⁰

Before the establishment of the Office of the Night, sodomy was punished by mutilation, loss of civil rights, exile or death in extreme cases (often in case of recidivism)⁴¹. But the heavy penalties did not encourage denunciations and made the hunt fruitless. With the Office of the Night, a new system of penalties was erected. Rocke Michael mentions 50 gold florins instead of 1000 lire for an adult convicted of sodomy. The amount rises *in crescendo* with each repetition: 100 for the second offence, 200 plus a two-year ban for the third, 500 florins and life imprisonment for the fourth. And finally, death at pyre in case of a fifth recurrence. Before 1432, adolescents between 12 and 18 were treated differently depending on whether they were passive or active. Thus, active youths were subject to the same penalties as an adult. But with the office of the Night, the penalties went from 10 florins to 500 and 10 years of exile at the sixth recidivism. A seventh recidivism led to death, but only once the 18 years had passed (Michael ROCKE, 2010, p. 51-52). However, in most of the cases recorded by the Office, teenagers of 18 old and under were absolved regardless of their role in the sex game, thus reinforcing the notion of innocence of teenagers. Michael Rocke notes that this legal and practical recognition of the special status of twelve- to eighteen-year-olds perhaps reflected the growing attention in Florence to adolescents as a particular age-defined social group.

In Venice, the penalties were definitely heavier. For example, in 1426, the Council of the Ten judged a group of six people found guilty of sodomy. Two of them, adults and active, Paduano d'Oltranto and Marino Alegreti paid with their lives (by decapitation, then burned at pyre) their fault, while the others recognized passive⁴², were fined only to receive lashes, considering their age. In 1422, Bartolomeo Trivisano, 14 years old, was

⁴⁰ This idea is taken up by Michael, ROCKE in that term: “When civic Fathers decided in 1403 to promote prostitution in public brothels, they acted in part on the medieval truism that prostitution, however distasteful or sinful, was needed to prevent the even worse excesses of sodomy with boys or the rape of “honest” wives and daughters”. (Michael ROCKE, p30).

⁴¹ “any corrupt sodomite [who] will have been discovered with some boy is to be fully castrated; a boy who, on the contrary, will have consented to foul himself with such a crime [is to be fined].” (Michael ROCKE, 2010, p. 89, 283 note 10).

⁴²The Council of Ten - in Italian, *Consiglio dei Dieci*, often referred to as the Ten - was established in 1310. Its main role was to oversee the security of the state. But among its many functions, the body also served as a morality police. As such, it dealt with issues related to sodomy, as this was considered in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to be sexual behaviour of a public and undesirable nature, and therefore to be eradicated.

released after his accusation for sodomy because: "It is just to follow the ancient and good customs of our forefathers who always held that children be freed of whatever crime even if they have confessed or have been proven guilty" (Guido, RUGGIERO, 1989, p. 122-123). In 1424, the young Bernardo Salvador was also acquitted of his charge because he was still "a boy and too naive to know how he should behave in society" (Nicolaus HAJEK, 2015, p. 11). According to Venetian custom, male children under the age of legal responsibility were not culpable and thus not to be prosecuted for their crimes. The "agens", or aggressor, was the initiator of the misdeed. He made the decision to commit the act and carried it out; the patients merely submitted himself to the act".

All these examples show that in sexual relations between adults and boys; the first is found guilty, instigator and spoiler of the latter, who almost escapes because of his age, confirming our claim that these laws promulgated by public authorities are the implicit goal to protect "children" from sexual abuse by adults.

Conclusion

This article, shows that the question of protecting "children" from sexual abuse caused by adults was a constant concern during the European Middle Ages. After establishing a correspondence between definitions of the child today and in medieval ages, we have highlighted two essential arguments to support this thesis. First, when the Church prohibited fornication, it implicitly settled the issue. The regulations in effect in monasteries tended to prevent sodomy, and as this illicit act usually binds adult monks and oblates, isolation and surveillance measures taken, are also advantageous for these children. Therefore, they prevent sexual abuses of the latter. The prohibitions raised by penitentials and manuals of confession as examples lead to specify the nature of sentences taken against the "transgressors". Secondly, the energy deployed by public authorities, in the cities studied (Florence and Venice), to unmask and punish active sodomites, coupled with the age gap existing between the partners (adult-child relationship) tend to depict that these laws and judicial procedures had the visible aim of protecting children from adult corruption.

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All links have been checked on 03-05-2024.

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