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# The mortification of the flesh and the desire exposed: control over girls in Catholic institutions

Carlos Manoel Pimenta Pires<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

In an attempt to understand the genesis of the education dedicated specifically to women, I analyze a textbook called *Manual de piedade da donzela cristã* (*Manual of piety of the Christian maiden*), which was used in boarding schools and convents for girls, in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My purpose is to describe, in part, based on a Foucauldian analysis, one of the forms of constitution of the ways of being feminine in contemporary times, reflecting historically about the development of a knowledge-power over women. I propose to recover what had traditionally been the organizer of Catholic institutions for girls, i.e., their peculiar modes of standardization and maintenance of the populations of girls and women according to the Christian disciplinarian mode, as one of the paradigms of the female subject. Thus, the *episteme* and moral specific of women was formed, with equal participation of Catholic theology and other fields of knowledge, joining the normative demands of the post-revolutionary period of the 1800s in the production of a productive feminine – transplanted to the figures of the good mother, loving wife and obedient worker, or what could determine the woman socially controlled and promoter of the modern nuclear family. My thesis is precisely that the formation of the contemporary female subject has broad participation of ecclesial instructions. To defend it, I shall analyze that manual, which will be considered a window that opens to an investigative perspective of the everyday life of girls in denominational schools and monasteries.

## Keywords

History of education – Textbooks – Gender and Education – Foucauldian archaeological methodology.

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# ***As mortificações da carne e o desejo exposto: controle sobre meninas em instituições católicas***

Carlos Manoel Pimenta Pires<sup>1</sup>

## **Resumo**

*Na tentativa de compreender a gênese da educação dedicada especificamente às mulheres, analisaremos um livro didático usado em internatos e conventos de meninas, da segunda metade do século XIX e início do XX, chamado Manual de piedade da donzela cristã. Nossa proposta é descrever, em parte, uma das formas de constituição do modo de ser feminino na contemporaneidade, refletindo historicamente a respeito da elaboração de um saber-poder sobre as mulheres, fundamentando-nos em uma análise foucaultiana. Propomos recuperar o que tradicionalmente fora o organizador das instituições católicas femininas, ou seja, seus modos peculiares de normatização e manutenção das populações de meninas e mulheres ao modo disciplinador cristão, como um dos paradigmas do sujeito feminino. Assim, juntando-se a demandas normativas do período pós-revolucionário dos 1800 na produção de um feminino produtivo – transplantado nas figuras da boa mãe, da carinhosa esposa e da trabalhadora obediente, ou o que pudesse determinar a mulher socialmente controlada e promotora da família nuclear moderna –, formaram-se episteme e moral específicas da mulher, com participação paritária da teologia católica com outros campos de saber. Nossa tese é justamente que a formação do sujeito feminino contemporâneo tem ampla participação das instruções eclesiais. Para defendê-la, analisaremos o referido manual, que será considerado uma janela que nos abre para uma mirada investigativa do cotidiano de meninas em escolas confessionais e monastérios.*

## **Palavras-chave**

*História da educação – Manuais escolares – Gênero e educação – Metodologia arqueológica foucaultiana.*

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## **Introduction:** Brief description of female education until the nineteenth century

We can say that, as a result of the so-called modernity, the family became a priority for the government of populations in the West. As a consequence, the treatment dedicated to female specificities has become one of the central themes among thinkers since the Renaissance.

The idealized feminine had been incorporated into the design of lay and religious humanists, in which the need to impose controls on the behavior of the individualities of women was assumed, linking them to normative processes of regulation of subjectivity. Obviously, the goals of moralists and other behavior scholars were not circumscribed to women, but widened to the social as a whole, since women represented an important vector within families (VARELA, 1997, p. 193).

In turn, until the nineteenth century, in the legal and theological fields – as well as in common sense – women were regarded with suspicion in relation to their capabilities and attitudes, and were kept under legal and moral guardianship. The control of their social life passed from paternal responsibility to that of the husband or of the convent in an experience characterized by heteronomy (HOUILLON, 1974, p. 09).

With regard to education, convents played an institutional role relevant to those who were sent to such places. After the religious wars in Europe in the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church made a great effort to found women's orders dedicated to maintaining an instructional environment for children and adolescents who were preparing to be religious. Concomitantly, I cannot fail to mention that the denominational education centers for girls who would not necessarily become nuns grew in number. In such institutions, both in day schools and in the cloistered ones, teaching was primarily religious, and instruction was reduced to reading, prayers, a bit of writing and the teaching of some so-called feminine actions, e.g., sewing (HOUILLON, 1974. 16).

Even after the so-called Liberal Revolutions, male guardianship is maintained

in most European societies and in the New World, and educational monastic structures continue existing. Both male guardianship and educational monastic structures are maintainers of a femininity closed in homes and institutions controlled by the Church (BOTHONEL; LAURENT, 1974, p. 99-137)<sup>1</sup>. In the nineteenth century, No Western society did grant to women the possibility of full citizenship, for example (FRAISSE; PERROT, 1993, p. 12).

On the other hand, as a differential in the 1800s, I can add the rise in importance of the feminine to a protagonism in the destinies of Western societies. In the specific case of the church, women started to have a primary role in the moral edification of social bodies, and were placed within the family as the educators and exemplary mothers. It was a kind of male counter power and was in an endless moralizing process of correction.

The feminine soul, distinct and complementary to the masculine one becomes, for the Church of the Restoration, a reservation of civilizing resources and conversion possibilities. (GIORGIO, 1993, p. 183-184)

Throughout the article I intend to understand the organization of a type of power exerted over women in denominational institutions of locking, trying to understand the formation of a female subject in the interstices of Catholicism. I do not wish to state that this is the only way to be feminine, but I intend to conceive a distinctive type which somehow remains in the subjectification forms of women today.

Thus, I affirm that the institutionalization of the Christian family has undergone a way to discipline and govern the behavior of girls, concatenated to the development of a *device of feminization*, in which would be renewed precepts of interaction between the sexes and of

**1-** In France, for example, not until the 1870s did the French state implement a network of primary schools open to girls, treated equally in comparison to boys.

the formation of a new society, very similar to the one we live in (VARELA, 1997, p. 175-176).

### ***Manual de piedade da donzela cristã* (Manual of piety of the Christian Maiden)**

As the object of study, I will take excerpts from a textbook tailored to the education of girls cloistered in convents and Catholic boarding schools. The one titled *Manual de piedade da donzela cristã* (1919) was developed for teachers. It was devoted to the instruction of religious practice and was indicated to be read by the girls themselves in denominational institutions.

The first Portuguese edition took place in 1873. In my analysis, I consulted the fifteenth reprint, an issue with a good print run of the manual that allows assuming its widespread use in Catholic school centers around the Luso-Brazilian world. It is important to remember that the practice to make and use manuals of piety in Catholic instructions, comes from far away – there are several other writings on how maidens should behave circulating in the Catholic world –, establishing a practice of faith incorporated into the institutional daily life of Christian schools.

According to the book's introduction, its daily reading was indicated to young women, working as a *vademecum* of conduct and civility. Moreover, masters could use it as a teaching support to religious studies, and were allowed to randomly select some passages for collective reading, with clear intentions of discussing any negative or positive behavior of the girls that day.

Divided into five parts, this work articulated the norms related to liturgical behavior with conducts in general (politeness, manners of civility and sexuality). In the first part, entitled *Uma flor a colher a cada manhã* (A flower to pick every morning), there are suggestions to whom or to what they should pray and meditate, which are divided into a diary, which is a kind of spiritual calendar. The second item is dedicated to determine the daily

habits of girls, detailing the standards of ascetic conduct. Following, there are spiritual exercises and methods of hearing Mass, in a training of religiosity. The fourth part of the book explains the duties of religion, in a presentation of the sacraments and duties of a good Christian. Finally, there is a description of the practices of devotion, trying to connect the Catholic apprenticeship of the present with its past.

I have included the textbook as relevant in the analysis of female education on the assumption that the readings were objects of control by the church, which was attentive to what was read, and produced its own literature to occupy the spaces of secular literature. "Reading little and reading well: this is the maximum. [...] No digression: reading is an examination of conscience through the mediation of a text." (GIORGIO, 1993, p. 198). Soon, what was read will be considered as a possibility of agencement of the feminine.

As an exercise of a Foucauldian archaeological analysis, I divided the passages selected for analysis into five explanatory platforms in order to have a privileged perspective of the female knowledge that emerges from a specific type of organization of discourse of the past and at the same time disciplines women, which results in a new subjectivity.

These platforms were grouped as follows: control of desires (item 3), rationalization of actions (item 4), asceticism of behavior (item 5), calibration of love (item 6) and meticulous uses of the flesh (item 7).

### **The restriction of individuality and the control over the conduct of Christian neophytes**

- Let us pray that God grant us the grace of repelling the temptations that we have today.
- Jesus and the afflicted.
- What impression should make in the hearts these words of Jesus: 'all who suffer come unto me: I will comfort you.'

Nobody had spoken like this, especially nobody had accepted the afflicted as Jesus... So see who are the poor, the sick, the destitute that accompany Him. Who will warm them before? Who did not repel their company? O Jesus, teach me to have a good heart, to love, to seek those who everyone repels... Give me grace to comfort many unhappy in my life.

– I will seek to be useful to some companion of mine today. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 90)

“Repelling the temptations that we have today” and “seek to be useful to some companion of mine today” are excerpts from *Uma flor a colher toda manhã* (A flower to pick every morning), which aspired to question the desires of individuals, replacing them with an instruction that departed from possible sinister impulses. In this particular case, it is speculated that altruistic initiatives should counter temptations, erasing what was most individual in subjects – their wants – and placing focus on something that would mean subordination to the will of the group.

It deals with intimacy in order to condition it to a public role to be played, that of “loving, having a good heart, comforting the unhappy.” In the flowering of an argumentation about Christian ethics, with this excerpt, we realize how relevant desires are and make up the peek of control over individuals of the Catholic body, bringing the hypothesis that they became the priority in the intimate examinations of the educational environments maintained by the Church.

Bringing up the subject of intimacy was not a phenomenon unique to Catholicism. In recent centuries, the control over wants has been used as an influential device in the tactics to maintain power over individuals. More specifically during the nineteenth century, there was a hyper development of the discourse about desire, which led to new ways to understand it – which Foucault (2003) called *scientia sexualis* –, with which it is sought a true form of occurrence, both in behavior and aesthetics.

In attempts to control the relationships that individuals have with themselves – as noted in the section of the *Manual* – desires and, consequently, their own physical pleasures, were regarded as significant actions to those who exerted power over girls. This would be one of the most significant consequences of the devices of sexual repression and impediments in religious education. I can say, however, that these devices were also reproduced, at the same time, by the body surveillance of medical science and by the controls over the unconscious applied by the psychoanalytic and psychiatric practice (FOUCAULT, 2006).

Therefore, around the period of the editions of the book (1873-1919), the control of female sexual behavior was launched by the formation of an entire religious, medical and psychological framework of thoughts and behaviors that could visualize the perversion of the soul, unhealthiness of the body and the abnormality of the mind. In an endeavor of standardization and constitution of the device of femininity, with centennial theology associated with a certain rational psychology in the opposite direction to an irrational spirituality traditionally positioned.

In contrast to rationality as the keeper of the faith, there was, for example, penitential mysticism, which had been a way women had exercised holiness since the earliest days of the Church, who, amid the prayers and meditations, had visions and conversations with God, Jesus and all the possible Christian cosmogony. St. Teresa of Avila (Doctor of the Church and founder of the Congregation of Discalced Carmelites) was perhaps one of the main models of how the Church gave credit and authority to such way of exercising the belief (ANDERSON AND ZINSSER, 2007, p. 230 - 233).

The ascetic way touted in sections of the *Manual*, and that we will see in more detail later, relinquishes of the ecstatic mysticism in the name of the rationality of faith, proposing a training that controlled faith, giving to spiritual exercises little room for autonomy.

Nevertheless, [...] the Church changed its attitude towards women who witnessed a mystical experience. [...] It refused the potential authority of visionaries, honoring them with a condescending childlike innocence and not for their special ties with divinity. (ANDERSON AND ZINSSER, 2007, p. 238)

## **Rationalizing prescriptions of female spirits**

Let us pray in reparation for blasphemy.

- The eleventh fruit of the college is strength of will. The rule is sometimes uncomfortable, but how much the character disciplines, teaches to curb imagination, to reject fantasies, to fulfill duties! Submit yourselves honestly and you will have energy to suffer the sorrows that assail you later.
- I will try today to observe silence. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 37)

The *Manual* proposes to convert the blasphemous desire, contained in the soul, into an object of rational reflection, not through a painful punishment to the body, but simply through the imposition, among the female disciples to conduct, of the silencing of the spirit. By silencing the joyous soul, it bets on the eruption of the feeling of ignorance about their own subjectivity and, more specifically, about the power of their desires.

The *Manual* caused the encounter of individual ignorance about oneself and the whole constitution of a technology of interrogation of the intimacies via knowledge accumulated by institutional observation of female masters conductors, to try to understand from outside the desire of individuals and its modalities. In the case cited, the religion intended to bring fear to the examination of imagination, showing the girls their unpreparedness and risk to go into such an indomitable place.

This would mean not paralyzing internal engines of want, but understanding their interference in the constitution of the

subjects. In a departure from their assignments, it was about using their energies to germinate true desires (the ones authorized by the Church), those in which one was encouraged to contain more what is considered correct, in contrast to an increase in the intensity of pleasure, which would put individuals in their own route, out of the ecclesial sight. It is a rapture of people's intimate daily life through silenced discourses.

In this new institutional arrangement that formatted a truth about feminine action, the ecclesial power would act with rules and actions to clarify the interdictions, incorporating and fabricating a language that was imposed on the act of granting and blocking the not tolerated. Therefore, statements about general behavior were prepared, including specifically that related to desire and pleasure, making clear what is allowed in the use of a reference of what is unlawful.

It was created an environment that naturalized a state of law totalizer in the act of speaking about the conduct of others. In terms of strategies, there were attempts to fully censor the conduct with intentions to stifle individual desire. We propose to explain three examples. First: what is prohibited.

Examine the sins made [...] against the next. Rash judgments, contempt, hatred, envy, desire for revenge (specify whether it is against your masters or partners); giving bad advice, bad examples; doing evil deeds; backbiting; slander; false news; disputes, harsh and injurious words; lack of zeal and kindness; lack of respect and docility; cunning. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 403)

Second, the announcement of the blame when one sins.

- Let us pray for the souls that have long resisted God.
- You must atone for your sins: for this purpose God allowed the rules of the house



to constrain and sometimes displease you; willingly withstand this constraint.

- I will not make the slightest infraction of the rules, with the intention to expiate my guilt. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 179-180)

Third, the existence of a higher state, that of purity.

- Let us pray for those who work for the salvation of souls.

- The twelfth fruit of the college is innocence, which is preserved here in its entirety; the innocence that, through countenance, always gives us a glimpse of the eternal youth of the soul. Oh! That still for a long time you are unaware of evil! Love prayer, escape from dangerous situations, seek your masters.

- I will repeat many times the invocation: the Holy and Immaculate Conception, Virgin Pure, Queen of Angels, obtain for me purity of soul and body. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 37-38)

On the other hand, there is a complementary standardization of behaviors that would create or maintain appropriate libido. It was developed a whole technology and knowledge in relation to appetite and temptation, heterogeneous in their controls, instigators and conductors. I enumerate three types of inductions. First: the faith associated with the act of believing unconditionally.

I firmly believe my God, every morning that Thou have revealed, and that Thou teach us by Thy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church, and Thou can neither make mistakes nor mislead us, and in this belief I want to live and die. Amen. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 217)

Second: use of the Savior as a stimulator of holiness among the young.

- Jesus and the children.

- Jesus is sitting surrounded by the disciples... Ahead, through the crowd, his paternal view spotted little boys, who were shy near their mothers, He extended his arms. The children understood this appeal of the heart, and approached Jesus, who embraces, blesses, keeps them near Him, speaks to them about heaven. [...] O Jesus, I am also a child, I run to you; caress me, speak of heaven to me. If I always keep simple, innocent, meek, you will you love me forever, won't you?

- Oh! Away from me, thoughts, desires, affections, which would deprive my heart from what pleases Jesus.

- I shall prepare myself fervently to the next Communion. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 86-87)

Third: salvation accessed by hope.

I hope, my God, with firm confidence, that through the merits of Jesus Christ my Lord, Thou will give me Thy grace world here below, and if I follow Thy commandments, thy glory in the other, because Thou have promised me, and Thou are faithful in Thy promises. Amen. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 217)

Thus, here I expose not a description of a history of repression of sexuality organized by the Church, nor its liberation. Actually, we propose to understand the reason for so much interest and, consequently, the production of knowledge about the desires and, subliminally, about female sexuality; for being linked to intimacy, they gained great importance in the Catholic discussions of that historical moment.

The Church tried to invent forms of relationships with their followers. Some imported from itself as asceticism of celibate monks, the pastorate of its missionaries, the control of behaviors through confession and the archetypal uses of Christian entities. Still, it included new devices of command, embedded in everyday life and adapted according to the demands arising in the



internal relations of its institutions, as school discipline itself. However, all these stratagems had in common the conduction of conducts as the center, in a rationalization of behaviors. There was not a pure repressive nature. On the contrary, there was at the same time, incitement and control of individual wills, manipulating them so as to fit them in its normative field and its categories.

We assume that the discourse on sex, since the eighteenth century, has developed sufficiently to stimulate sexuality itself in the so-called West and that, contrary to what one might assume, it did not have a definite shape, or a single issuing body. There was a polyformism of knowledge production, which generated a complex field of knowledge about sexuality. Next, we shall peer into how this specific ecclesial knowledge in the 1800s about female sexuality was developed.

### **Self-surveillance and desire combined as acts of asceticism**

Let us pray for those who are prone to melancholy.

- God does not like the girl with exalted and romantic character and, who fills the heart and mind with vague, effeminate, sensual ideas, always colored with a reflection of innocence and candor, which deceives an inexperienced soul like yours, but hides deep down great danger and sometimes evil without remedy. Such girl does not live in the present ever: there she vegetates like a plant, her heart is always beyond three or four years.

- [...] Daughter, occupy yourself more, overload yourself with work, always do what you are told; otherwise, you will be exposed to being very unhappy and guilty. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 164)

One of the meanings of conducting behaviors, pictured above, deals with intimate matters, based on the ability to assess the

infinitesimal conducts by accessing directly the subjective, in a formation of micro powers over the body that could lessen instincts and desires. Complementarily, healthy behaviors are programmed, determining moralities that were justified as reducers of suffering in life and avoided future deviations.

This type of meaning can adapt to the Catholic discursive order, as it helps to infuse the practice of identifying potential sinners, regardless of their pure past. It activates the reflexive practice of healthy precaution of the soul, in which the exercise of self-surveillance that never flags is instilled in subjectivity.

That's why, in the nineteenth century, sexuality was scrutinized in every life, in all its details; it was unearthed in conducts, chased in dreams, suspected behind the minimum follies, followed until the early years of childhood; it became the key to individuality [...]. From one pole to the other of this technology of sex, a whole series of different tactics is staggered. Such tactics combine, in varying proportions, the goal of body discipline and that of the regulation of populations. (FOUCAULT, 2003, p. 137)

In this context, a look at the child and adolescent sexualities arises, regarded now as an energy-storage that could be turned into positive, if it were used in a self-regulated way, in a procedure to be related to psychological maturation.

In other historical periods, the speech and behavior of the younger did not circulate and were not seen among adults. They started to hear and perceive them in the mid-eighteenth century, with no intentions to make the emancipation of these beings flow, but to regulate them, forbidding their communication through normalizing statements. Denominational schools were among the first to create an environment that could appease that puerile power, diverting it

and adapting it to a control structure that first realized what was said to later impose another speech, the one authorized by the agents of ecclesial institutions.

The repercussion was the fixation of the general identity of the younger on a specific one, appropriate to the Catholic ambitions. From then on, “curbing passions” and “taming them through prayer,” was nothing more than a bond of subjectivity to desires. As a sequel of this, bodies and behavior were positioned in relation to this component of the soul, and the others were relegated to the background. In the name of a standardization of the libidinous behavior of the so called Christian youth – and, thus, of the formation of a predominant way of relating with one’s want – the Church began a real hunting of smaller and/or peripheral tastes and pleasures called sins.

If one boasts of beauty, clothes, wealth, talents, birth; if in the way one dresses, talks, walks, one has the purpose of exciting admiration. If we think we are better than the next. If one is ashamed of one’s parents. [...] If one is hard with the poor [...]. If the good and deserving of others saddens us. [...] If we lose patience; murmur, and deliver to outbursts of temper. If we are stubborn. If we stay in bed for laziness. If we waste time on trifles, if we remain idle, if we make others waste time. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 401-402)

Seeking to explain to the girls the capital sins in an adapted way, the textbook actually listed their possible identities by mistake and not by honor. It opted to associate the Catholic woman with abnormality and not with a kind of perfect Christian, something external and ineffective as a demarcation of virtuosity. It acted influencing directly the girls, encouraging them to identify their faults and correct them on their own. This went beyond mere Salvationist forgiveness; particular natures were formatted.

The formation of highly complex structures of vigilance was summoned to pay attention to the petty disorders, emphasizing everyday life and its trivial faults. To do so, it was constituted a speech about the faulty girls, those who in everyday life broke the rules already known, who were placed on the side of deviation, at least in the eyes of those who held the predominant order of discourse.

Let us pray today asking for the opportunity to do well.

- God loves a silent girl. Oh! Many graces are granted to those who, to please God, keep silent during the study, in the classroom, in the dormitory!... Starting very young to curb one’s tongue makes one expect great virtues for the future.

- If I fail absentmindedly today, I will do a little mortification in the cafeteria. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 170-171)

A whole chain of powers is mixed to the usual, exploding potencies among the ones that managed to, somehow, stop the domain of who gives the allocution or its diverse forms. The result is the spring of a multitude of competent discourses on what a little girl and a young girl should be, usurping the everyday life of individuality itself and taking charge of unimportant facts.

It was about silencing vanity, anger, shame, greed, stubbornness, laziness, idleness and many other expressiveness of maidens, whose quality was abnormality. The perceptions of female anomalies occurred together with the intense movement to put in a discourse all these individual concerns and variations of conduct by those who were tasked to exercise power over women in training. This movement resulted in the muting of who should obey.

The political litany of banality should, in turn, try to rescue control of the whole, since the usual is inscribed in it. Hence the need to develop complex technology of control over the ordinary feminine, which created

nonsense: severe penalties for small errors. Complementing the dominion over the micro world, a whole machinery of intelligibility of sins was set up, in order not to extirpate them but to control them and include them. It is a process of unlimited daily self-inquiry in exercises that enabled the reproach of herself, which could open the soul so that the perverse desires could be accessed.

The usefulness of such systematization was the realization of a system that questioned the faulty girls promptly, in order that the sinner felt convinced of her own guilt, and therefore controlled herself after the attack of temptations. At the same time, the boundaries of vice would be envisioned and incorporated in a way that anyone who approached her would feel guilty already. The most brutal power, the one which acted in the most glowing interdiction would be the exception in this new provision of power over the feminine soul, as it would appear inefficient. One would understand, therefore, that sin and error never end, as they would already be in the nature of women.

Meditation was embedded here as something of capital importance in this mapping of the vices and virtues of Christian girls. It was not a drilling to summon relaxation or reach transcendence. It should fill up the imagination of rationalizations that watched what she thought. Therefore, it was proposed a conversation with God, in visualizing images of perfect beings that judge our actions, internalizing the girls' own inquiries and trials.

- What do I say to God! All I feel. When I have unpleasantness, I tell Him so that the Lord knows best, and this relieves me, I ask the Lord encouragement to bear them, to help me say and do what I should, then I speak to You Lord in favor of patients whom I know, of my parents, of those I love, I call them one by one, I communicate to Him what has happened to me, the evils that I fear ... I say this to our Lord as I would say to my mother.

- But this is not to pray.

- Oh! I do not know, but since God is my father, shall I not address myself to him as I do to my father, when we are together in the evening?

- It is a conversation, and it cannot be long when no one answers.

- Oh! There is an answer! Sometimes, it's sad, you do not hear anything, you do not feel anything, because God is angry. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 223-224)

For a conversation, interaction was required. For the interaction with God to become effective, the penitent girl should have attributes such as: the initiative to start; willingness to maintain a long dialogue; deep reflection arising from care about what she will say; an enrollment and ordering of events, dividing them, at least, into positive and negative; and an ending that brought a verdict. It was the pastor masters' duty to teach the courtship of God by penitent students, conveying the idea that they entered into an endless relationship. "Do not separate yourself from the good Lord that awaited you," (IGREJA, 1919, p. 238), i.e., meditation was a kind of marital commitment with God.

But what conduct was demanded by God in such an intimate relationship? In pillow talk with the Lord, what could He demand and praise? In much of the book, the prototype of the saint is indicated. First, it is said that God requires the creation of a daily life in which just prayer, study, work and rest occurred. Each of these activities should be perfected every day, in a way that pleased and did not provoke the divine displeasure. Second, they should give all the love that comes from the heart to Him, because He would be the only one who does so in a true way. At the same time, there is a pressing resistance to delightful invitations of the devil and the world, to avoid betraying the trust of who dedicated Himself so much to the girls.

Opposing the moments of boredom would be another rule of conduct towards God.

The empire of boredom would also mean that individuals tend to share their love and their attention with the world and find it difficult to dedicate it exclusively to Him.

The company of the Almighty would bring consolation, safety. But even if He were betrayed, the manual said that God would not abandon the person. However, she would lose the possibility of a relationship totally sincere and free of other outbursts. Just as God forgives His servants, one must repeat that and relate to others in the same way, bearing defects, helping on the needs and giving good examples (IGREJA, 1919, p. 239-244).

In the rules of conduct for us, in which girls would be helped achieve the holy status, the work dedicated to Christian maidens indicated that the feeling of pleasure is something prohibitive, and one should never fall in love and only love.

Having stifled the impulse of a passion in the heart, having removed an imperfection from the soul, is to have profited more than if one conquered a thousand worlds. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 245)

In the construction of the new Christian girl, the feeling of security was desirable. Proceeding from this, the chances of uncertainties decreased. Such certainties often stemmed from uncontrollable feelings of passion, which could seep into outbursts of rebellious individuality. In contrast, self-control should arise in girls, in exchange for the possibility of building a more predictable destination. Then arouse integrated actions of inculcation of feelings and affective relations that threatened the existence of individuals who emanated impulses and spontaneous emotions, and that also offered numerous advantages to those who were able to moderate their passions. (ELIAS, 1994, p. 198)

"Stifling the impulse of passion" somehow imposes an ascetic practice on children. Obviously, the Church had objected to debauchery since long ago. However, in the

manual, a kind of libidinous relationship of the girls with the Lord was admitted. In turn, there were rules introjected by means of a specific discipline to children. We can conclude, for now, that in traditional asceticism, desire was seen as forbidden and therefore avoided. Since then, desire started being admitted, and, in turn, regulated. Such a sensation was not avoided, but instead it was admitted that the subjects could be libidinous, provided that they directed the energy stimulated towards the Catholic objects.

### **The love of father and mother as regulators of controls over the body**

Let us pray that this month no deadly sins are committed in this house.

- Daughter, I give myself to all the girls who present a pure and loving heart to me; do you want me?

- Yes, Baby Jesus, I want Thee, come to my soul in Holy Communion, and remain so willingly as Thou have been in the manger, my soul is poor like this... but happy that Thy asylum knows how to love, wants to love and expand Thy feelings. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 19)

Elevated affection was an articulator of falling in love, not the uncontrollable romantic passion, but the ascetic, driven, pragmatic one, which is linked by privilege or wanting something in return. It is not a delivery to the beloved object, but is the creation of a bond that results in interdependence.

A loving contract between the entities and their Catholic worshipers is established, in which both donate and become faithful. Now it was up to individuals to fulfill the contract set out, made and confirmed through promises, requests, veneration, and other manifestations demonstrating love. Never could one frustrate the expectations of saints or the Virgin or Christ with her behavior.

The traditional Catholic liturgy already put the body as the central object of salvation, placed

in the ultimate example of consubstantiation of God in the flesh – in the case of Jesus himself. It was equivalent to demonstrating the possibility of salvation of the soul in the ways of providing behaviors to depart from sin, making the center of the Church's pastoral activity the adjustment of the bodies of the faithful to match a purification process close to the one that occurred to Christ.

Thus, some artifices to help the desirous of salvation by the body were made available: one of them was the Eucharist, representing the reception of the body and blood of Christ; the others were the rites of baptism, confirmation, marriage and extreme unction. Everyone wanted nothing more than confirm the dominion which God has on the body and indicate the Catholic subjects' loyalty to the precepts of purification.

In turn, since the nineteenth century, there has been heightened attention to the body of Jesus during his period of imprisonment and torture, which reinforced rites linked to the passion of Christ. Rosaries, public ceremonies of sacred way and devotion to the Sacred Heart only strengthened the inculcation of bodily suffering foisted upon the Savior so that he reached full purification (DELUMEAU, 1991). It is noticed a deepening of the flesh as a select place of innocence and the comfort of Jesus as the paternal guide.

As that of her son, the body of Mary also served as a model of asceticism and entity to be loved. It was emphasized a Madonna who had not committed the original sin, washing the conception of the Savior and giving faithful women a sense of the possibility of a life away from desire and carnal pleasure.

- Let us pray in union with the little children who died today and climb up to heaven.
- Daughter, I give you as a caress the veil of my sainted mother.
- I accept with happiness, Baby Jesus, it will remind me of the Holy Virgin's modesty: that only wanted to see you, and did not wish to be seen by anyone; with

her, today I will keep downcast eyes, will walk a little slower without affectation, will avoid anything that attracts the attention of others. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 23)

Accompanying the image of the Immaculate comes that of the Assumption, also growing devotion among Catholics of the nineteenth century, who could conceive of a Maria who did not go into a state of decrepitude – since she could not resurrect, her son's exclusive role. In this characterization, Our Lady just ascended into heaven without aging marks, glorified in eternal youth, exempt from the bodily decay of the rest of mortals. Therefore, Our Lady appears caste, maternal and jovial.

- Mary Most Holy is the model I study.
- O my mother, what delicious thought I've had this morning! Kneeling before your beloved image, I thought, Mary Most Holy was a girl like me... Oh! If she had been a companion of mine in the Temple of Jerusalem where, as I'm here, she was a disciple! So before my eyes, as if the good Lord wanted to fulfill my desires, Thou appeared to me as a girl, O Mary Most Holy! And Thou said to me: Be my companion and friend, will you? (IGREJA, 1919, p. 71)

In a numerous pantheon of saints, and even though Christ himself was available, the figure of Mary was hoisted, and had a protagonist role as relevant as that of Jesus, her son. From her, one could draw multiple qualities linked to the feminine. Here, one has to consider Mary as a figure of empowerment.

With its acclaimed beauty, the Church promoted a fusion between the bodies of the faithful women and that of the saint, indicating something that would keep the Catholic women isolated from their incited desire. Purity demonstrated a conduct representative of self-control and made girls introject the behaviors to be followed. Concomitantly, the possibility of the female as a role model was opened.



The cult of the Virgin Mary would allow multiple associations, in which were placed ways of positivization of the exercise of power by the Church over the faithful. First, it was established a universal feminine ethics – watched by the surrogate father, Nazarene, Redeemer – which moralized desires channeled into a permanent sexual continence and into the encouragement of a maternal love of conservation. Secondly, it was launched an aesthetic of youth associated with Marian purity, which raised the girls to a priority position in the salvation of mankind.

**Conclusion:** the mortification of the flesh and the design of control over families

The woman in the second half of the nineteenth century became a host of institutional colonization, and the Church was one of the colonizers, realizing in the possibility of manipulation of the female body a powerful space of social control of the Catholic world. Women went from a position of extras to the protagonism of religiosity, since the time of its institutionalization through formal schooling.

One of the results was small mortifications, posited as one of the strategies of the disciplining of the female body, replacing the blood and pain, so frequent in the Old Regime as ways of expressiveness of penitence. Thus, the detachment of herself in the trivial would be internalized, including accounting rationality of small sacrifices according to the consubstantiation of desires and pleasures.

- Let us pray for the companions that in another time referred us to evil.
- You must mortify your body. Do not give to it everything it claims for, sometimes deprive it of some of the little tastes that only serve to weaken your soul.
- I shall deprive myself of some goodies in meals. (IGREJA, 1919, p. 178-179)

One notes a difference from the way of thinking about the salvation of the souls of

women in Catholicism. Penances would not be indicated so emphatically any longer, those that could lead to self-violence by those who had already sinned. In a refinement of the dominance, they acted in the thought with the intention of avoiding *a priori* the committing of sins.

By implication, a natural outburst, the relations of affection would increase within the households. Michel Foucault (2003) even launches the thesis that that has brought an incestuous way of relating to relatives from the nineteenth century on. Families have become the core of perpetuating a device of control of desires, both in the pursuit of an idealized perfect behavior, and in the constitution of abnormalities themselves.

Calling you to this college, God had in view, no doubt, the salvation of your soul, and also of that of countless souls, which your more regular and fervent prayers here, together with those of your masters and companions, will help to convert.

The Lord had in view the salvation of your parents, for whom you will pray here more effectively, because your most fervent prayers will be impregnated with the trust that warms the heart of God [...] (IGREJA, 1919, p. 213.)

Families were presented as the place of arrival of Christian values. Until the seventeenth century, to live was essentially social. The family existed as an experience, but not as a feeling of belonging or moral value. The sociability of family groups was mostly publicized, leaving little intimacy. Families in the eighteenth century and more markedly in the nineteenth century became protected small societies, which gradually moved away from social relations, civil obligations and traditions (ARIÈS, 2003). In reality, a tension between private family life, organized by the intimacies, and public living was another result of the dismantling of sovereign societies and the experience of industrial societies. That is, the

specific community habits of families clashed with the requirements of civility (SENNET, 1988).

In a partial way, the Church was one of the institutions that ventured in the resolution of this tension, with attempts of introjection of its own civility via schooling. The new apostles devoted themselves to rearrange the new social relations, with special attention to families.

On the assumption that the public world was flawed, it was important to start from the rearrangement of the virtues of individualities, and then go to parental accommodations and finally succeed in reaching the social body. By controlling desires rigidly, families would be the moral refuges of society, protected from a social life seen as corrupt.

In its second part, the *Manual* is dedicated to determine the correct actions of a girl's day, from the waking, through clothing, manual work, recreations, studies, meals, to how to lie down. It stated that the youth should accumulate treasures in life to achieve the grace to enter paradise (IGREJA, 1919, p. 118-119).

The night has come... if the day was occupied due to the performance of duties, thy will be placid! Don't you feel deep shock every night, wondering eerie silence that will surround you? This bed in shape of tomb, the sleep that will separate you from the whole world, the darkness that surrounds you and through which it seems that you see the eyes of God, who examines you, the small lamp that burns without noise, does not all that impress you? When you do not have a clear conscience, oh! How afraid can you be! In daylight, it looks like maybe you can wrestle with God, someone would be there to defend us... but at night... Oh! Silence! Self-communion! Modesty! Prayer! (IGREJA, 1919, p. 208-209)

The book strengthened a retrospective investigation of the self, which became one of the primary objects of activity of subjects in modernity. It stimulated regrets, fueled

asceticism, mortified carnal desires, but at the same time, it provoked heavenly desires, wants of individualities, covetousness of a safer world. The Church and its agencements, its statements and its devices invited the faithful to build themselves autonomously. However, in limbo, in the whispers of darkness, hiding the pleasures in the privacy of Christ's bedroom and in Mary's lap.

Altruism, silence, self control of affectations and others were ecclesial prescriptions to a kind of idealized feminine behavior, which were presented by this text in the selected excerpts of *Manual de piedade da donzela cristã*. In a subtle way, it was suggested a subjectivity to be achieved and that connects precisely to a disciplinary production of the woman who had been raised as a structural component of the families, going beyond the very post-revolutionary society which was being formed. In this context, individuals and the desires that arose, the actions that occurred, their behaviors focused on, the loves and passions sprouted and the uses of the flesh, were gradually subjected to an extended control, a proposed rationalization, to an imposed asceticism, to a calibration suggested and to the calculation of the uses of the body.

What were the effects of power induced and coveted on those who held the truths generated by the discourses on desire? That was our fundamental question.

It follows from the need to take knowledge of in what ways, which pathways and how would be organized the competent discourses about libidinal behaviors and thoughts that came to individuals and conformed their conduct. For me, the Church entered deeply into this rationalization of the discourse on volition, even constituting its own one on the behaviors involved with this issue by establishing truths, assuming the position of a central generator – especially in its educational institutions – of a part of the knowledge about sexuality in modernity and, more particularly, about women.



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