Sexuality in the Medieval Era

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# Introduction

During the medieval period the sexual question was not censored, but was conceived as something natural . In fact, even the Church carried out treaties on this same one. But, at first, sex, as well as sexuality were condemned by Christianity . This circumstance was going to suffer to a greater extent the woman of the Middle Ages, because, as in many other areas, she was in a position inferior to that of her analogue, man . And, precisely the Christian Church was going to promote this defamatory and contrary conception to the female sex. Regarding the sources used, Pilar Cabanes , in her article " The desire of women in the light of some medieval literary compositions " denounces the absence of studies carried out by women, since the analyzes prepared by men show a notion of sex, specifically sexual desire, totally biased.

# Tone of Sexuality in Earlier Era

People tend to think that sexuality was toned down in that era. This has given rise to a false and distorted vision of women's reality, a product of what Cristina Segura , author of the essay " Society and the Church before the sins of women in the Middle Ages", calls "patriarchal reason " , creator of the figure of Eve , who, by eating the forbidden fruit, according to the Bible, is punished and relegated to the domestic sphere . Meanwhile, the man would also receive a sanction due to the sin committed by Eva: he would devote his greatest efforts to working the rest of his life, so that the public environment would be covered only and exclusively by men. As a result, a division of labor would be established according to gender .

# Sexual Deals in Middle Ages

The Middle Ages are wrongly accused of the sexual evils that occurred in the Renaissance, from early marital arrangements to inadequate hygiene: in reality it was an erotically prolific and even imaginative era (Maines, 2001) . For example: the technique of women to increase the sexual desire of men already sensed the aphrodisiac power of shellfish. They caught a live fish, put it in the vagina until it died, and then cooked it to feed the husband. In the Middle Ages, even contraception was used: most women did not practice it because it was considered witchcraft, but others actively decided not to get pregnant and enjoy sex. For this they practiced "coitus interruptus" in consensus with their partner. However, the social tendency was procreation, so impotence was considered a reason to end a marriage. The only socially endorsed sexual position was the missionary , as it was the most effective way for the wife to become pregnant. Female masturbation was considered a major sin: it was understood that if a woman engaged in onanism she would neglect her marital obligations. If it was done, I was punished with a year of prayers.

# Role of Prostituion in that Era

Prostitution was allowed by the clergy: they discovered that the men who came to the brothels ended up more focused on the way of God (they did not get corrupted, they had more peace inside, they respected women and they did not fall into homosexual practices). The Church considered this office a necessary evil but, in short, recognized that it contributed an important economic activity. Mind you, adultery was only punished to women, because we have already pointed out that men could be clients of prostitution without being judged. The religious who confessed to the sinners also knew all the sexual postures and if they left the missionary they imposed different penances. Celibacy was questioned: in fact, 30% of the priests lived in concubinage (Maines, 2001).

# Sexual Liberty in that Era

On the other hand, Cristina Segura is based on a series of medieval religious documents of great rigor, such as penitentials , catechisms and conciliar regulations . This writer is going to focus at first on the conception of sin by classifying it into various categories, one of which refers to " sexual disorders ". In addition, he defines it as a "transgression of the established social order", so that sins also influence socially. In medieval society, the Church imposed that sex was only possible within marriage and with the sole purpose of procreating. That is, if the couple was going to have sex it was just to make children, not to procure pleasure. Otherwise, it would be sin (Maines, 2001). They were based on the "honest copulatio" which means "practice of sex with the chaste reason to continue with the species".

# Importance of Marriage

By the way, within the marriage was only allowed to have sex from Monday to Wednesday, and at night, because the day was sin. They were forbidden sex from Thursday to Sunday, they could not copulate during Lent, neither in the 35 days before Christmas, nor in the 40 days prior to the Pentecost party, much less could they have sex if it was a day in the that a saint was celebrated. It also manifests the difference between male sins, linked to the public (trades, property, etc.) and feminine , related to the private , domestic, such as lust . This same, one of the seven capital sins, commented by both authors, gives rise to sexual insatiability that is attributed to the female figure (hypersexuality) . That sick desire, sexual avidity or ardent sexuality that gives rise to practices as perverse as nymphomania or incest. Cristina Segura points out that "Lust is without doubt the most serious and frequent sin" [...]. This is a sin where female participation is great. "

# Literature Aspect on Sexuality

On the other hand, these two writers refer to the existence of two totally antagonistic types of women: Eva or the "bad" woman (sinner) and Maria or the wife and mother . The first of these women, Eva, would represent the image that of the woman has been transmitted, as much by the literary sort as by the Christian church. It is characterized by that " fiery sexuality " and rebelliousness that Cristina Segura mentions, as well as being sensual, demanding or revolt , as Pilar Cabanes states. Other sins that are assimilated to Eve are avarice, laziness, incest, adultery or infidelity, fornication, abortion or use of contraceptives, tendency to prostitution or sorcery . In short, the woman is linked to original sin (Maines, 2001).

# Image of Ideal Women

As for the image of that ideal woman , according to the medieval mentality, it must be a passive woman, created with the main objective of making man happy , since he is an inferior being. In turn, you must avoid one of the main sins attributed to the female effigy: the incitement to man to consummate the sexual act , which makes the man a sinner. This conception that Christianity had of the woman was transmitted to the Islamic religion , which, at first, decreed equality between men and women, although it ends up promulgating the inferiority of the latter. Previously, in the Koran , both Eve and Adam are victims of the devil, but in the Christian religion, Eve is the devil himself , since it is he who tempts Adam to sin.

# Conclusion

Finally, regarding the characterization of the woman, she is represented as a weak being, incapable of subjecting her parents, with less intellectual capacity than the male, without rights or responsibilities (Maines, 2001). In short, it is relegated to the background and its passivity is the greatest of its virtues, since it must be limited to receiving and accepting, as well as favoring the happiness of the man , that dominant human being and superior to the woman. In short, the views expressed by these two contemporary authors show an image that women had in the Middle Ages in most places where the Christian religion prevailed, which underestimated women in favor of men, who always placed one step ahead.

**Reference**

Maines, R. P. (2001). The technology of orgasm:" Hysteria," the vibrator, and women's sexual satisfaction. JHU Press.